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"For Percival."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A REVERIE IN ROOKLEIGH CHURCH.



PERCIVAL awoke the next morning, gazed at the window, and perceived that a bee was trying to find a hole in the invisible wall which parted it from the blue vault and liberty. He smiled as he watched it. "Poor thing, did it expect to find any flowers here? I suppose it wants to be free; but, if it did get out, the blue itself would be its prison, only so big it wouldn't know it. Are we ever free, I wonder, or does liberty only mean that we have not yet run our heads against our prison walls? Poor wretch, how it frets! I must turn it out—directly." ("Directly," that

is "immediately." Why does this word at the end of a sentence always suggest a slight delay? "Directly" in this case meant that Percival would stretch himself lazily, and meditate a few moments longer.)

I fancy Queen Sleep has a multitude of attendant sprites, who wait upon us during the night. She bids them take our burdens of weariness and trouble, and let us have some rest. We load them very heavily, poor little things—so heavily sometimes that they cannot support the

back-breaking weight, and fragments of our everyday anxieties slip down and mingle in our dreams. But the elves do their best, only now and then they are mischievous, and say they will at any rate have an exchange of burdens, so they toss their queer little perplexities to us to hold, and we have very fantastic visions indeed. It may be that they get so dull towards morning with the burden of our dulness, that they do not notice when we open our eyes, and thus we gain a moment's respite. It happened so that morning, till a little elf, who had been released by an earlier riser, suddenly burst out laughing, hands on hips, gauze wings quivering, and droll head on one side.

"What *are* you standing there for? Why that fellow is wide awake, and talking about bees and liberty these five minutes!"

"So he is!" said the drowsy sprite, and flinging his load to Percival again, he darted off. The young man sat up with a suddenly troubled face, forgot the bee, and remembered everything else.

"It isn't possible!" he said.

Something of Aunt Harriet's feeling awoke within him, when he considered the matter by the light of day. I do not know that he thought of the presents exactly, but it did seem to him that he and Sissy had gone too far to draw back. What would everybody say? Percival hated the thought of the gossip with which Fordborough would be flooded. And what would his grandfather say? With whom would he be angry? For angry he would undoubtedly be. Percival could take no comfort from the thought that he would probably escape the old man's wrath, for he felt that Sissy must be sheltered at any cost. He could not walk off in easy impunity, and leave her to bear the blame, yet Sissy was not dependent on his grandfather, *and he was*; there was the sting!

His heart was aching too. Even if he had Prior's Hurst, what would it be to him without Sissy? There was a doubt, far down in his soul, whether she had not touched the truth when she said they were not fit for each other, and should not be happy. Unhappiness was possible there, but he was ready to run the risk. For was happiness possible elsewhere? It did not seem so to Percival. He had set his heart on Sissy; she had given herself to him; and it was only three weeks to their wedding day. It was true that he had told her she was free, but, if she accepted the freedom thus granted, she was forsworn. How many times had she told him that she was his for ever!

What should he do? He pondered many lines of conduct, and at last came to the somewhat feeble conclusion that if the next morning brought him no news from Brackenhill, he would write to, or perhaps see, Aunt Harriet, but that for that one day he would drift. Percival had an uneasy, half satirical, consciousness that his grave meditations generally ended in a determination to drift, a result which might have been attained without any meditation at all. He breakfasted, fighting all the time against importunate thoughts not to be easily banished. He stood

by the window, beating an impatient tune upon the panes. "By Jove, I can't stand it, and I won't," said Percival. "I'll go somewhere for the day."

He walked to the nearest station, and happened to stand by a respectably dressed artisan, who was taking his ticket. "Third—Rookleigh," said the man.

"Where on earth is that?" said Percival to himself. "I'll go and see." He varied the class, "One first—Rookleigh," he said, and followed the workman to the Rookleigh train.

It was interesting—at least with an effort he could fancy it was interesting—to speculate what kind of place his destination might be. "Sounds rural," he reflected. "Ought to be plenty of trees, and rooks in them. Market? Perhaps. Inhabitants—say about eight hundred and fifty-three—the three has a business-like sound about it. Occupation? Agriculture and straw-plaiting. Church newly restored, no doubt, and the deluded parishioners think that is a reason for going to look at it."

Rookleigh, when he reached it, proved to be a good-sized, sleepy, country town, which seemed to have trickled down the side of a gentle hill, and crystallized on its way. At the bottom of the slope loitered the most placid of streams, with gardens and orchards on both sides. Most of the riverside houses were red, solid, and respectable. Percival soon decided that the place was inappropriately named, as there was not a rook to be seen or heard. Its principal productions appeared to be poplars and pigeons. The result of his observations was that two householders out of three grew poplars, and three out of four kept pigeons. The tall trees quivering, and the white birds flying, against a background of unclouded blue, had a quaint, peaceful effect. There was much house-leek growing on the steep red roofs, and a decrepit black dog lay dozing in the middle of the principal street. Percival strolled about the town, and looked at shop windows, till the time came when he could go to the Red Lion for some luncheon. They gave him pigeon pie, at which he was not surprised; in fact he did not see how they could give him anything else, poplars being uneatable. He made his meal last as long as he could, and then studied the portraits of two or three country squires on their favourite hunters, for he had discovered that Rookleigh was a place from which it was not easy to escape. Failing a train at 1.5, which would have interfered with the pigeon pie, and left him with the afternoon on his hands, he could not get away till 6.45. "A very good time too," he said philosophically. "I shall get back to dinner with an appetite."

The resources of Rookleigh could not be said to be exhausted, while the Church, which was a little higher up the hill, remained unvisited. A small boy undertook to fetch the clerk, who kept the key, and while he was gone Percival sat on a large square tomb, and wondered why its occupant, or occupant's friends, had chosen such a memorial. "There seems

to be a wish that each person's death should cause a sort of little wart on the earth's surface," he reflected. "From the Pyramids to those low green hillocks, I suppose it is all the same thing. Luckily we can't all have what we want, and Time interferes with the plans of those who do, or the face of creation would be speckled with our miserable little grave-stones. I'd rather be put away altogether when my time comes, and have the ground smooth over me; or, if my name must be recorded somewhere, it might be on a bit of pavement."—The clerk appeared, more out of breath than seemed proper in such a quiet place as Rookleigh.

Percival followed him into the Church, which was spacious and dim, and had something of faded worm-eaten stateliness about it. The old man made a few remarks, but had not the unpleasant fluency of vergers in much frequented places. The boy who had been Percival's messenger amused himself with a little stone-throwing in the churchyard, and the clerk, after a few glances over his shoulder, stole softly through the open door to pounce upon the guilty child.

Percival smiled, and went up to the chancel. It was wide, and not encumbered with pews, and he paused in the open space, noticing the effect of a slanting ray of light. All at once he said to himself,

"This is just where I should stand if I were going to be married."

And in fancy he tried to people the empty chancel with the guests who should have gathered for his wedding in three weeks' time. It was a dreary pastime in a dreary place. And when he would have pictured Sissy standing by his side, to be bound to him for ever, he could not recall her face and form, with anything like their wonted clearness. No effort would avail. Indeed, after a prolonged endeavour it almost seemed as if he could call up nothing but two frightened eyes, which gazed at him out of the still atmosphere of Rookleigh church.

He shivered, and, hearing the old man's step behind him, broke the silence with the first question which came to his lips. "Do you have many weddings here?"

"Not many. Not but what it's a fine church for 'em. Plenty of room you see, sir."

Thorne nodded. "What makes your pavement so uneven?" he asked.

The other looked down. "Why, it's old Mr. Shadwell; he's just under you, sir. It's his vault. He was rector here, five-and-fifty years ago. He was a great scholar, they say, and had five sons, all parsons like himself."

'All scholars too? And all buried here? You must mind what you are about, or the ghosts of the reverend family will be astonished some day, by a wedding party suddenly descending among them," said Percival, as he turned away.

The old man pocketed his fee. "We'll be sure and have it mended before you come to be married here, sir," he called after his visitor, who passed out into the sunny glare.

Where next? A boat on that languid stream? Unhappily people did not row on Rookleigh river, or would not let their boats if they did. Percival had to content himself with a walk along the bank.

Coming back he halted, struck with a house on the opposite shore. It was a large, rather handsome red house, old, yet the perfection of neatness and repair—perhaps even a little too neat, like a fashionable middle-aged woman who is never careless. Its garden lay spread, one uniform sunny slope, to the river's edge, and ended, not in possible inequalities of bank, but in a neat low wall. Even now, when June would soon dawn in its glory on the happy world, the house and garden suggested autumn to Percival, and he stopped to wonder why. He thought it might be partly the long straight path which ran down the centre of the slope, and which was of old gravel, subdued in tint, and with a row of espalier apple-trees on either side. Perhaps too many apple trees in a garden do suggest autumn, as soon as their blossom is fallen. There is an idea of laying fruit away, of garnering a serviceable harvest. Espaliers, too, are not so much trees, as just that amount of tree, which will give the necessary apples for pies and puddings, as if one should say to Nature, "We do not like your heedless, unrestrained ways, and will see no more of them than we can help." On one side of the house was trained a tree, but not for any ripe delight of August peaches, though it took the sunniest wall. A pear—Percival had an unreasoning conviction that the pears would be hard—probably requiring to be baked or stewed. Nor was there any wealth of climbing roses in the garden, but he could see chrysanthemums dotted at intervals down the long walk, with neat precision, and he was sure that before they blossomed, the place would glow with the earlier splendour of dahlias. Also there were too many evergreens.

Down the central path came an old lady in slate-coloured silk, carefully looking to right and left, and apparently removing an occasional snail, or dead twig, or injured leaf. Her dress glistened in the sunlight, and Percival watched her awhile from between the hazel boughs, before he became aware that there was some one else in the garden. A cross path had its occupant, who came and went behind the laurels and aucubas, with the unfailing regularity of a pendulum. The leafy screen was too thick for Percival to do more than see that some one passed on the other side, but each time, as she turned at the end to resume her walk, there was a glimpse of a soft grey gown, and once—surely once, for a moment—of a grey hat, and golden hair. Again, and again, and again, he caught the vanishing fold of her dress, but never again that momentary vision. Certainly there were too many evergreens. Why did she walk there? Swift though it was, the dreary regularity of pace told not of inclination but of duty. Percival watched and grew impatient. "Why doesn't she come into the middle walk, and help to pick up snails?" he said to himself. "Anyone would, who saw the poor old lady hunting about." The latter, who was vigorous and alert

and not so very old either, would not have been best pleased could she have heard his pity, and what was worse, the wearer of the grey gown did not share it, for she left the old lady to deal with the snails single-handed.

Presently some people came along the footpath, and Percival, who did not choose to be caught watching, sauntered a little way to avoid them, laughing at himself for his interest in the mysterious lady, as he went. "If I could have seen her I should not have given her a second thought," he said. He looked at his watch and was surprised to find that it was past six. He turned and retraced his steps, for he was walking away from Rookleigh, and, as he went by the old red house, he looked once more at the garden. Both the ladies had disappeared during his absence.

"Stupid!" said Percival. "If those people hadn't driven me away I should have seen her go. Now she will remain a mystery for ever."

The mystery did not long retain possession of his thoughts. As he journeyed homeward he recollected that at that hour the evening before he had parted from Sissy. There came a faint glow to his olive cheek as he remembered how she sprang to him, and clung with her arms about his neck, and how he felt her tears and kisses on his face. His heart kindled at the memory, and then grew dull. "She was very sure of herself, or she had not dared," he thought.

It was past nine when he stood at his own door, having stopped to get some dinner on his way. He could eat, in spite of all his perplexities. He was met by the announcement, "Two telegrams come for you, sir."

A telegram is not the alarming fact it used to be, but to be told of two awaiting him quickens the pulses of a man who seldom receives one. Thorne felt that something urgent had occurred. He walked quietly into his room, turned up the gas, saw the envelopes on the table, stretched out his hand to the nearer of the two, hesitated, took up the other and tore it open.

Godfrey Hammond, Brackenhill, Fordborough, to Percival Thorne, Esq.—All is over. You could not have been in time. Will meet first train at Fordborough to-morrow.

He stood like a statue, but his brain reeled. "My God! She is dead!" he said at last. "I have killed her. And she wanted me, and I was not there." If suffering could expiate sin, that moment's agony should have cleansed his whole life. He did not think, he did not attempt to think, what had happened at Brackenhill. Sissy was, in his eyes, as delicate as a butterfly or a flower. A breath might kill her, and this telegram, with its "All is over," hardly seemed an unnatural ending to the passion, and terror, and hopeless renunciation of the night before. "All is over," she had said, and had torn herself from his arms. And what her sweet lips had uttered, the hateful paper echoed—"All is over"—and lay there like incarnate fate.

Percival lacked strength to open the other message. What could it

tell him that he did not know? He felt as if the unavailing summons, which was imprisoned there, would stab him to the heart. Out of that envelope would rush Sissy's appeal to him, her last cry out of the black night of death, and no answer would be possible. He walked to and fro, casting troubled glances at it. His pleasant familiar room suddenly became a hideous torture-chamber, and a black pall had fallen over his life.

At last he opened the second message with fingers that quivered like aspen-leaves. The paper rustled in his hands, as he unfolded it, and read:—

Mrs. Middleton, Brackenhill, to Percival Thorne, Esq.—Your grandfather is dangerously ill. Come at once. Do not lose a moment.

He flung it down, and faced the world, a man once more. It was not that he was heartless—that he did not care for the old Squire who was gone. He felt the blow, but this was a grief which came out of the shadows into the light of common day. It was like waking from a death-like swoon to the anguish of a wound. A nightmare was transformed into a sorrow.

CHAPTER XXX.

OF A GOLDEN WEDDING.

As the 9.15 train slackened speed at Fordborough Station, Percival looked out and saw Godfrey Hammond standing on the platform. It was exactly what he had anticipated, and yet it gave him a little shock of surprise to see Godfrey just as usual, in a light grey suit such as he often wore at Brackenhill, trim, neat, alert, looking as if he had slept well, and breakfasted well, and watching the train with his glass stuck in his eye. Percival did not really expect to see any outward signs of grief. It was hardly probable that Hammond would appear with his clothes rent, lamenting aloud, and casting dust upon his head, yet his unchanged aspect startled the young man. Have we not all been startled in the same way by the want of sympathy between outward things and our inward joys and sorrows? If our feelings change, do we not straightway want the universe made anew to our pattern?

Percival sprang out, and suddenly came within the range of Hammond's eyeglass. A smile of recognition dawned on the other's face.

"Ah, here you are!" he said. Perhaps there was a little more firmness in his clasp, as he shook hands with the young man. "That's well. I was considering what I should do if you didn't come. Only that bag? The carriage is waiting." The station-master came up, touched his hat, and made a remark. "Thank you," said Hammond. "As well as can be expected. Very sudden—yes—and very terrible. Are you ready, Percival?"

The brougham was outside. "We shall be by ourselves," said Godfrey, who generally preferred the dog-cart. A minute later they were rolling smoothly along the road, which Percival had traversed in such haste so short a time before.

"I was out," said young Thorne abruptly. "I didn't get your messages till between nine and ten last night."

"I said you were out," Hammond replied. "It was quite as well. You could not possibly have been in time, and could not have done any good."

"How—when did it happen?"

"Yesterday morning, quite early. In fact it was all over before the first telegram was sent. But when they awoke Mrs. Middleton with the news—in a very foolish and inconsiderate manner, I fear—she absolutely refused to believe it, and they tell me her first cry was 'Send for Percival—Godfrey will want Percival!' She wrote the message to you herself, but, long before the man could have reached Fordborough with it, she must have known it was utterly useless. In fact, after the first shock she rallied, and regained her calmness and good sense in a most surprising way. She feels it terribly, but when I got there she was quite herself."

"But how was it?" said Percival. "When I left my grandfather on Wednesday night he seemed quite well."

"Ah that's the sad part of it. It was an accident."

"An accident!"

"Poison," said Hammond. "An overdose of some opiate or other. No—don't look so scared. There was no possibility of foul play. It is as clear as daylight."

(What Godfrey Hammond said was perfectly true. There *was* no foul play, and the death was as mere an accident as if Mr. Thorne had killed himself by falling downstairs. It was not really more terrible that his hand should falter, than that his foot should slip. But there is always something ghastly in the idea of poison, and Percival's heart seemed to stand still for a moment.)

"He was late on Wednesday night," said Hammond. "He wrote a letter to Hardwicke and sent it to the post. After that he sat for a considerable time alone in the drawing-room, for Sissy was not well, and Mrs. Middleton was with her. When he went upstairs Turner noticed that he was more inclined to talk than usual. He said more than once that he had had a good deal of anxiety and trouble of late, but that now he hoped all would be right. Just as he was lying down he remarked that he had written to Mr. Hardwicke, and should drive to Fordborough the next day to see him. Turner says that his answer was, 'Oh, indeed, sir, then I suppose Mr. Hardwicke is home again?' and that Mr. Thorne sat up with a startled look on his face, and said, 'Good God! is Hardwicke out?' The man was surprised, and told him that he had heard that Mr. Hardwicke had gone abroad somewhere, but he did not

know for certain. Mr. Thorne lay down, and told him he might go, but Turner, who has the next room, you know, says he does not believe his master slept at all. He could hear him tossing uneasily in his bed, till being tired he dropped off to sleep himself. He was awakened after a time by Mr. Thorne calling him. 'I can't sleep,' he said, 'and I can't afford to lose my night's rest, for I have something I must do to-morrow.' He told Turner to bring his little medicine-chest, and unlocked it with the key which hung with two or three others on his watch-chain. Turner was not surprised, as he occasionally took something of the kind, though not very often. He waited to carry it away again, but Mr. Thorne looked up with the bottle in his hand, and said the candle was too bright, and hurt his eyes, and that he could see better with only the lamp which burnt by his bedside. Turner was going to put it out when your grandfather added, 'And that dressing-room window rattles again—go and see if you can stop it.' He thinks he might have been five minutes at the window. When he looked back from the dressing-room door, Mr. Thorne was lying down, with his face turned away from the light. He was quite still, and Turner was afraid of disturbing him with the candle or his footsteps, so he did not go in, but went round by the passage to his own room, and softly closed the door between the two. When he went in at about eight the next morning, Mr. Thorne lay in precisely the same attitude—dead."

"How do they know it was——" Percival began.

"Turner saw how much there was in the bottle, and drew his own conclusions. The idiot needn't have rushed to announce them to Mrs. Middleton, though. Your grandfather had lately been taking something for those headaches of his, and the man's theory is that in a fit of absence he poured out the same quantity of this. I don't know, I'm sure, I'm not in the habit of taking poisons myself, and don't understand anything about them. I locked everything up, or the whole household would have had their fingers in the bottle."

"There will be an inquest?"

"To-morrow. But there is no possible doubt as to the result." Godfrey took his chin between his fingers and stroked it meditatively as he spoke. "I shall miss the old Squire," he said after a pause, with a weight of meaning in the simple words. "But, thank God, it must have been a painless death."

"I—suppose so," was Percival's reply. He was wondering, even while he acquiesced, whether there had been a moment, the merest lightning flash of time, during which the old man had been conscious of his blunder. If so, there had been a moment of suffering keener than death itself. And even if not—where was he now? Did he know that his delay had ruined his favourite? Did he, even in a new life, feel a pang of impotent anguish at the thought of what might have been? "For he cares still," said Percival to himself. And his heart went forth in deep

tenderness towards the old man. "If you could only know," he thought.

"Duncan telegraphed to me on his own account," Hammond went on, "and sent the message at the same time as the one to you, only his was more accurate. I got it about an hour before the train left. I always told—I always said that old butler was no fool—except about wine."

"Sissy?" said Percival.

The other looked grave. "Sissy is not at Brackenhill. She was far from well, and we feared it would be too much for her—the inquest, and funeral, and all. Laura Falconer came over yesterday afternoon, and insisted on taking the poor child away. We persuaded her to go, and when she found we really thought it was best, I think she was not altogether unwilling."

Percival knew, by his sense of relief, that he had dreaded a meeting with Sissy in that horrible house of death.

"Horace—is he back again?"

"Yes, and Mrs. James too. If there were any conceivable piece of mischief that she could have on hand, I should say she was plotting something. They have sent off telegrams with mysterious secrecy, and they hold solemn councils in every corner. But as I can't see what they can be after, I suppose it is only Mrs. James Thorne's agreeable manner."

"Most likely," said Percival.

"Young Henry Hardwicke came over yesterday with the letter. His father has gone to see about some French property, which a client of his wants to sell. He was not certain about the distance to the place, nor how long he would be there, so he only gave Henry his address at a Parisian hotel. We have written and telegraphed there, and have despatched a message to him at his final destination as well as the young fellow and I could make it out, but I am not at all sure of it."

"He has not answered then? An awkward time for him to be away."

"Yes, but he had an appointment with the Squire for next week—I suppose to settle things for you and Sissy. Your grandfather says nothing in the note except that he is coming over, and particularly wants to see Hardwicke that day, and to look at his will."

Percival sat for a moment in silent thought. This was the will which had been made before he ever saw his grandfather, and which the old man had been so anxious to alter. What was in it? It would not leave him Brackenhill, nor Prior's Hurst, not so much as an inch of land. But was it possible that there would be nothing whatever for him? The Squire had not said that, and it did not seem probable that he would have altogether passed over one who had done nothing to offend him, when he thought so much of his family, and the Thornes were so few. But Percival was constrained to own that it was possible. A couple of days earlier he had feared dependence—now he feared beggary.

"This will put off your marriage," said Hammond, suddenly.

"Yes," said Percival, still absorbed in thought. But a moment later he turned and looked at Godfrey.

"No, it won't," he said. "There is no marriage to be put off. Look here, Godfrey, the day may come that I shall ask you to remember when it was I told you this. Sissy and I parted for ever before my grandfather's death—do you understand? Aunt Harriet can bear witness to that. It was on Wednesday night. We thought it was best. If anyone was to blame, it was I. It is all over, really and finally. At this present moment Sissy no doubt believes that I am the master of Brackenhill. Knowing what she knew, and being well aware that my grandfather had no time to change anything after his talk with me, she can hardly think otherwise. But the Fordborough gossips will say she threw me over because I was poor. You must contradict that——"

Hammond looked fixedly at him. "Ah!" he said. "But will you be poor?"

"Horace will have Brackenhill."

"Horace hardly thinks so."

"He will. At least, unless there is some flaw in the will, which is not likely, as Hardwicke made it. Even then I should not dispute his claim. You had better not say anything to him, perhaps, till the will is read; but I know how it must be."

"Well," said Hammond, "suppose Horace does have Brackenhill; and perhaps he has the best right—may I say so?"

"I say so."

"Your grandfather could still provide for you, so that you would not be poor in any terrible sense of the word. Perhaps you may even be in easier circumstances than Horace, who will have that great house to keep up."

"Had my grandfather lived another day, he would have provided for me," Percival replied. "As it is, the will that Hardwicke will produce is an old one, made five or six years since, before I ever set foot in Brackenhill."

Hammond was startled. "You don't mean it! You'll come badly off in that, my poor fellow," he said. "What, had he never altered his will? It is incredible—at his age! What folly, or——"

"No," Percival interrupted. "Don't say a word against him. Suppose he should be able to hear us!" he said, with a half smile at the fancy—a smile which ended in a sigh. "I wish he could; I should like to tell him something——"

"They were turning in at the gate. The old woman who opened it caught sight of Percival, and curtsied reverentially, mistaking a meteor for the rising sun. The young man answered with an absent nod. "I only tell you this, that you may stand up for Sissy," he said, as they went up the drive.

"That I will, if needful," his companion replied. "But I'm sorry to

hear this. Perhaps, after all, there may be no opportunity for any gossip. Are you quite sure——"

"That it is all over? Yes," said Percival.

Aunt Harriet met him, with a face which was pathetic by reason of its very calmness. Her eyes were swollen and tired, and the pretty pink colour in her cheeks had all retreated into the little veins. Her lips quivered suddenly now and then, as if a barbed arrow-head had been left in her wound. She looked doubtfully at Percival for a moment, but there was no mistaking the sadness and sympathy in his eyes; and, as if drawn by an invincible impulse, she put up her face, that he might stoop and kiss her.

"God help you, Aunt Harriet!" he said.

But even as he spoke she drew her hands away, and turned aside. "Don't talk to me just yet, Percival."

Her heart was torn with conflicting feelings. The young man who stood before her—his dark eyes eloquent with his desire to comfort her in her sorrow, was Godfrey's Percival, his favourite—was dearer to Godfrey than all the world beside. She had felt as if her heart were breaking as she drew her hands out of his soft, lingering clasp, and yet as if it were treachery to leave them there. For what had he done with his smooth words but make his way into her brother's heart, and rob Horace of his inheritance? And what had he done with his eloquent eyes, and clasping hands, but win Sissy Langton, and break her heart? Sissy had said that it was not his fault—that he was good; but how could Mrs. Middleton believe him guiltless, when she knew how the poor child had loved him? Sissy would never have been false to him—it was not possible. And yet, after all, he was Godfrey's boy; and there was nothing now that she could do for Godfrey except what she did for Percival.

She dropped into her armchair again, and hid her face in her hands. When she looked up, he was still standing there, silenced, yet pleading. Presently he knelt on one knee before her.

"Aunt Harriet," he said. "He was very good to me. I wish I could tell him so, but I can't, so I must tell you. I've no one now, you see."

She laid her trembling hand upon his head. He had no one now. That was true, but he would have Brackenhill, and friends would come in crowds. He had health and wealth, and all his life before him; and he would prosper and be popular, and go on his triumphant way, and find a new love, and marry her; while her poor dying Horace and her broken-hearted darling passed away like shadows from his path. That was the future as she saw it in her grief, though it turned another face to Percival.

"Don't think me unkind," she said to Godfrey's boy, "but you must go away for a little while. I can't quite bear it yet; I'm not very strong."

Going out, he encountered Horace in the passage, looking terribly ill and worn—a shadow with feverishly brilliant eyes. Percival held out his hand. The other just touched it with his fingers; but he did even that under protest, as it were, and because Godfrey Hammond was standing by, and an open quarrel would be unbecoming in that house of death.

"This is very terrible," said Percival.

Horace uttered a murmur of assent, and escaped.

His cousin looked after him with pained eyes. Then he turned to Godfrey Hammond. "I shan't be long at Brackenhill when its master is known, shall I?" said he.

"Who knows?" was the reply. "If it be as you say, he will have no cause for ill-will."

"He'll only think I tried to supplant him, and failed. A year ago we were friends, but that can never be again. At times I almost fancy someone must have poisoned his mind against me."

"Mrs. James, perhaps," said Hammond. He would have attributed anything to Mrs. James.

They went out on the terrace. Percival sat on the stone balustrade, folded his arms, and surveyed Brackenhill from end to end, as he had surveyed it the evening he saw it first. Then his grandfather had reproached him for his indifferent declaration that he liked old houses, as if this were no more to him than any other. Now his heart was heavy within him because it was so much more, and he was so soon to be banished from it.

"When is the funeral to be?" he asked.

"Monday."

"Monday! Isn't that very soon? Why, it—it was only on Thursday morning——"

"It is unusually early," said Hammond. "But Mrs. Middleton especially wishes it to be on Monday." He touched a spot of lichen on the stone with his slim forefinger, and eyed it thoughtfully. "Did you ever notice, Thorne, how great women are on domestic dates? They always know your birthday, and when you had the measles, or the precise day on which you made some one an offer, or fell downstairs, or were confirmed, or vaccinated, or came of age. Haven't you noticed?"

"Well?" said Percival.

"Well," said Hammond—trying hard to speak as if he scoffed at the little sentiment, and doing it in the tenderest voice, and with his head turned away, because, though he cared for few people, he cared much for the Squire and Aunt Harriet—"well, it seems that next Monday will be the anniversary of Mr. Thorne's wedding-day, fifty years ago. So Mrs. Middleton has the fancy that it shall be the day of his funeral—a sort of golden wedding, eh?—when those two shall be side by side once more. Very absurd, you know—what difference can it make? Of course the whole thing must seem doubly ridiculous to you; you can't get up

any sentiment about your grandmother, can you, Thorne? Why, if she stepped out of a romance, she *is* your grandmother, and there's an end of it. I remember Mrs. Thorne very well. She used to go about the house wrapped up in a drab shawl, and she read prayers to the poor Squire and the servants, and had the toothache a good deal. When I came over from school one day, and he tipped me a sovereign, she saw it, and said, 'Half-a-crown would have been ample, Godfrey.' I buttoned my jacket over it, and ran away as hard as I could go, but I can hear her very tone at this moment."

"Perhaps," said Percival, "she wasn't quite the same fifty years ago. Perhaps she isn't quite the same now."

"Perhaps not. And, at any rate, Mrs. Middleton doesn't see any absurdity in it. She was Miss Harvey's bridesmaid. Half a century ago, to the very day, the bells were ringing over there, and the children throwing flowers down on the path, and people making speeches and fools of themselves; and Mrs. Middleton was a pretty girl, as merry as any of them. And now—it's horrible. He's to go back there to be buried, and she—By Jove, he's the lucky one now!"

"But he wasn't married at Brackenhill?" said Percival.

"He was, though. General Harvey lived in the old red house near the rectory. You can't remember it; it was pulled down twelve or fifteen years ago. I wonder if there are any others alive who were at that wedding. What a ghastly meeting it would be if they could come together, eh? I wonder why she couldn't let it rest, instead of forcing one to think of all this nonsense. But, being a woman, of course she couldn't. So Monday it is to be, and Monday it shall be, if the undertaker and all the milliners die of overwork, and even if Mrs. James doesn't get her crape and bugles in time!"

So saying, Godfrey Hammond moved off; but Percival lingered on the terrace, thinking of that Golden Wedding.

Willie Falconer rode over in the afternoon to inquire how they all were, and to bring a note from Laura. Sissy was not excited or hysterical, but gentle, silent, and depressed. "She took no notice when I spoke of sending over to Brackenhill," Laura wrote. "I said, 'I suppose Mr. Percival Thorne must have arrived by this time,' and then she answered, 'Yes, most likely.' 'Have you any message?' I asked. She only shook her head, and laid her cheek on my hand. But just now she has looked up and said, 'My love to Aunt Harriet.' I will write again to-morrow, and hope she may be more like herself. I am thankful to say she slept well last night."

Percival, who had begged the note from Mrs. Middleton, studied it as if he would compel it to yield every atom of its meaning. "She slept well." Poor Sissy! That Wednesday evening she had said, "I wonder if I shall sleep now?" He thanked God that that poor little boon was not denied her.

Young Falconer went off with a letter from Aunt Harriet. The poor old lady, after writing it, made up her mind to a painful effort, and came downstairs. I think she feared some outbreak on Horace's part, and felt that her presence might control her favourite. She took her usual place when dinner-time came. There was a little difficulty among the rest of the party, and the two young men exchanged doubtful glances. Percival, who had given away Brackenhill, hesitated about resigning his right to his grandfather's chair. Neither so much wished to take the vacant place as was unwilling to seem as if he thought his rival had the better claim.

"Godfrey Hammond, will you sit at the bottom of the table?" said Aunt Harriet, in her gentle voice. "It will not seem so—so strange. You used to sit there sometimes, do you remember? A long time ago, when he was often out."

Percival dropped into a chair with a sigh of relief. He could yield the place, since it was not to Horace.

Hammond began to carve in his swift, methodical way. He had Mrs. James Thorne on his right, and Horace sat between his mother and Aunt Harriet. Percival was alone on the opposite side.

Mrs. James thought it her duty to be profoundly affected on this occasion. Her long-drawn and resounding sighs were heard from time to time, but she contrived to eat a very substantial dinner in the intervals. Hammond, even while he politely helped her, meditated profoundly on the restraints of habit and etiquette. They seemed to him extraordinarily powerful. Mrs. James took out a handkerchief with a wide hem, and wiped nothing out of her eyes with the greatest care. Hammond felt that if he had been a shade less civilised, he must have got up and shaken her that moment.

Horace played languidly with his knife and fork, but could not eat. He broke the silence once with a question. "Has anything been heard of Hardwicke yet?"

"Nothing," said Hammond. "But I shall hear as soon as there is any news. Harry Hardwicke has promised to let me know at once."

"What is to be done if he doesn't come?"

"I haven't the least idea. He will come." Hammond's tone was that of one who checks a discussion, and the heavy silence settled down again.

When the little party broke up, Percival went away on a melancholy errand. As he entered a shadowy room, and closed the door behind him, the outer world of warmth and light grew strangely small and distant. Advancing with noiseless steps he touched the heavy hangings of the bed. Life seemed nothing but a dream, and this calm, which ended all, the one reality. Standing by the dead man's side, and gazing on his face, he recalled the last words that he had heard that pale mouth utter, "It shall all be made right—to-morrow." And, before the morrow, Death had come, to set all things straight after his own fashion. The

young man, with his strongly beating pulses, looked down on the features which were placid and not unhappy in their fixed expression, but drawn, and cold, and like a delicately modelled wax mask, rather than a face of flesh. And as he looked he longed to be able to ask, "*Is all made right with you, now to-morrow has come?*" Yet, even while he longed to ask, he shuddered—O God! the horror, if those blue lips should uncloset and answer him! He could not take his eyes from the corpse, and a chill ran slowly through his veins. He felt as if a cold breath were blowing on him from the outer darkness, that girdles the little space of sun, and shade, and cheerful firelight, which we call our life. With a strong effort he tore himself away, and hurried downstairs. He was ashamed of his unreasoning horror, and felt that he would rather not face the others till he had recovered his calmness, so he turned into the library, and flung himself into an arm-chair. He was sincerely ashamed, and yet he could not help it. That was not how he should have felt—not how he had expected to feel, while looking for the last time on the poor old Squire who had been good to him. But as he sat in the gathering twilight, the troubled thoughts and fancies, which had swung beyond his control in that momentary terror, slowly swayed back to rest, and he asked himself why he should have expected his feelings to be after one pattern more than another. Others have no doubt known the same surprise and perplexity.

Many writers have described to us the emotions of the soul in supreme moments, and such descriptions are very striking. They are, no doubt, the fruit of undistracted meditation, and are enriched with the abundant adjectives of leisure. But when the crisis comes, in hurry and confusion, we are apt to discover with astonishment, that it has not conferred upon us the power of talking in blank verse.

Percival propped his forehead on his hand and pondered drearily. Suddenly into his downward bent eyes there came a flash of recognition and startled remembrance. The household work had been somewhat neglected during the confusion of the last few days, and as no fire had been lighted no one had looked at the grate. In the fender lay a little heap of black ashes. Thorne knew what they were. Overhead lay the man who had so long been master there, dead and impotent, and here lay his will, as powerless as himself. The young man felt that the destruction of that paper had cost him more than he had anticipated. The broken fragments of tinder mocked him with the thought of what might have been. But did he repent? No, from the bottom of his heart—No! It was a deed to be done without counting the cost.

All passed off very smoothly at the inquest, as Hammond had foretold. Turner gave his evidence clearly and well, there was no need to call Mrs. Middleton, who had literally nothing to tell, and there was a general feeling of regret, and respectful sympathy. In spite of his pride, and his perverse spirit of contradiction, Godfrey Thorne had gained a certain place in his neighbours' liking. He never achieved popularity,

but he had ruled at Brackenhill so long that people took him for granted, and only grumbled at his freaks, as they grumbled at the weather, or anything else that was entirely beyond their control. And everyone liked his sister.

She was wonderfully relieved when the dreaded hour was over, and began to move about the house with mournful activity, and to take an interest in the arrangements which had hitherto been left altogether in Hammond's hands. Other cares divided her thoughts with these sombre preparations. On Sunday afternoon she came downstairs with her bonnet on, and looked for Percival. He was in the library, reading the *Saturday Review*. He looked up when the old lady put her hand on his shoulder: "Will you give me your arm?" she said, "I want to take a turn in the garden."

Pacing to and fro, with little steps, on the sunny side of the clipped yew hedge, Aunt Harriet opened her heart to her companion. "Percival," she said, "I am so sorry about you and Sissy—so very sorry. I don't know what to say. I'm too old to meddle in your love affairs"—the feeling with which she had first greeted the news recurred to her—"a generation too old at the very least. But——"

"I don't know that," said Percival. "When people talk of second childhood they usually mean something unpleasant, but they needn't. We young folks sometimes feel as if the middle-aged people were the furthest away, and such as you were coming gently back to us. They have lost their illusions, you see, and are hard and embittered, while you——"

"Do you think illusions grow again for us?" said the old lady, looking up with a smile of tender scorn.

"No—if they are illusions there can be no resurrection of the dead for them. Only truths live. But there has been time with you for flowers to grow upon their graves."

Percival, burdened with the difficulties of his position, was not sorry thus to divert an embarrassing conversation into idle meanderings round the subject of youth and old age. It is a subject concerning which we almost all have something to say, for we must be young indeed if we have no backward glances, which love to dwell for a moment on the past. But Aunt Harriet was not to be turned from her purpose.

"I don't know much about any flowers growing now," she said. "And it isn't the right time to be thinking of a wedding, with our dead still in the house. But what can I do? For if you stand apart too long, you will never come together again. And Godfrey was so pleased that you two should marry. He wished it so—what can I do?"

Percival dropped his former manner in a moment, and came abruptly to the point, since what he would have avoided was inevitable. "What can I do?" he said gravely.

"Tell me what is wrong," Aunt Harriet pleaded. "May I judge

what you can do? Afterwards you can decide for yourself what you *will* do."

"It is impossible for me to tell you all," he replied. "Sissy and I differed about something. We didn't quarrel, you understand; we simply looked on the matter in question in a totally different light. I was grieved, but I did not see why we should not remain as we were, and live down our misunderstanding. Sissy, however, asked me to release her from her promise. I did so—God knows with what reluctance. But since then, the more I think of it the more I fear that Sissy was right."

Aunt Harriet took her hand from his arm.

"Ah? You think this unsatisfactory, and me cold?" said Percival. "You may understand me better some day. Or you may not."

"I couldn't understand you less."

"I can't help talking in riddles. Aunt Harriet, when anyone you love is dying, and lingers very long in pain, you would give your life that he should live, and yet, when death comes, it is a relief, and you know that it is best. I can't bear to look forward to my life now. I used to look forward to a happy future with Sissy. Now that future is dead, and has left me very lonely, but it is better that it should be so than that it should die slowly and painfully, as I fear it would have done."

"But why?—why? For she loved you. And you loved her?"

Percival bent his head, and the solemn gesture was more than a thousand words. "Are you sure she loved me?" he said after a pause. "I think not. She fancied she did—poor child!—but she was afraid of me. I felt as if she stabbed me when she looked up at me with her frightened eyes. I did not mean to be hard on her; I meant to be very gentle; but even my gentleness was rough and stern to her, it seems. When she shrank away from me, and begged for her freedom, what could I do but give it back to her? I would have given her my life, only it wouldn't have been much to the purpose."

"But are you sure—? It was so hasty," faltered Aunt Harriet.

"Shall I tell you what makes me sure, now that the first shock has passed, and I can understand it better?" said Percival gloomily. "When we were going to part, when I had yielded, and she was free, she put her arms about my neck, and kissed me. She wouldn't have let me hold her and kiss her, unless she were very certain of her freedom, unless she knew that I could never win her back again. And she cried, my poor darling, I felt her tears. She wouldn't have been so grieved for my pain without being quite sure there was no help for it."

Aunt Harriet looked at the little pebbles at her feet. She was silenced, perplexed, distressed.

"Perhaps in a little while you may see that it is best as it is, in other ways," said Percival. "At any rate, could anything be so dreadful as that we should marry, and that I should find that I couldn't make her happy, and know that I had had the doubt in my heart, even on our wedding day? As I should have."

"I don't know what to think," said Aunt Harriet.

"Wait," Percival replied. "Wait till this sorrowful time has gone by a little. See if Sissy is not brighter and happier for her liberty, if she does not regain her strength and spirits."

"But Sissy was ill before her engagement to you. That can't be it."

"Wait and see," he continued. "If she does, you will know that my fear was the truth; that she mistook her feelings towards me, and did not love me."

"If she is happier—and if not?"

"What can I do?" he replied. "I have given her all I could—and it was very little use, I think. Here is Hammond coming."

Godfrey, with his eyeglass up, came peering round the wall of green. "Harry Hardwicke is here," he announced as he approached. "He has had a telegram from his father. He didn't get our second message, evidently—I doubted if it would find him—for he heard nothing till he got back to Paris, after a longer stay than he expected."

"When will he be back?"

"He comes by the last train to-night, so he will be here in good time to-morrow."

"Thank heaven!" Mrs. Middleton exclaimed. "I was very anxious." She released Percival as she spoke, dismissed him with a sad little smile, and followed him with her eyes.

"Godfrey Hammond," she said, "I'm troubled about him."

"About Percival? Why?"

"About Percival and Sissy."

Hammond was studying a twig which he had broken as he came. "I know," he said looking obliquely at her. "But wait till to-morrow."

"Till to-morrow?"

"We all are anxious enough for to-day," Godfrey replied. "Percival's marriage couldn't be an immediate question; *don't* take up an unnecessary trouble, just when you are overweighted."

"It's you who have done everything, and taken all the trouble," said the old lady, looking up at him. "What with the letters, and Robinson—" (Robinson was the undertaker)—"and the *Times*, and the servants' mourning, and that dreadful inquest, I don't know how to thank you."

"Don't," said Hammond. "I didn't do it for the sake of thanks. I did it for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, eh? for your sake, and *his*, and because I'm a meddlesome fellow, who thinks he could manage creation better than anybody else. We know each other of old, don't we?"

Mrs. Middleton wept silently, and held his hand.

"Better?" he said after a minute or two, laying his other hand so lightly on hers that the momentary touch was barely a caress.

"You are so good—so good," Aunt Harriet whispered. "It would have been such a load on my mind—the mourning and all."

"Oh, I made Mrs. James help me," said Hammond. "Her knowledge went a good way, with a little of my common sense."

They were walking towards the house. "Don't be hard on Horace," said Mrs. Middleton suddenly. "Oh, don't be hard on my poor boy, for it's very hard on him already."

"I'm not hard on him. But to tell you the truth, Horace rather avoids me, so it isn't very easy to be cordial. I don't know why he should. Still I don't forget that both the boys are in a difficult position."

"Both?"

"Both," Godfrey repeated firmly. "I hardly know how one could be just to their respective claims. But you must find out how to hold the balance fairly, for they both love you."

I do not think any of the party slept soundly that Sunday night. Percival did not. He lay, seeking through the shadows for the first faint outline of the window, which would show that the brief summer darkness was drawing to a close. And as he lay there he tried hard to realise what seemed so incredible to him, that less than a week had done it all. Six days earlier he had been busy with the preparations for his marriage. It was on the Tuesday that he had called on Godfrey Hammond, and heard of the Lisle failure. Nonsense! It was absurd. Why, it must be months since Lisle failed! And yet he knew he heard of it on Tuesday night. Then on Wednesday he came down to Brackenhill, and Addie Blake was in the train, and made a mystery of something or other—talked in Gunpowder Plot fashion about some silly secret of hers, which could not matter to any one. And he told his grandfather of his loss, and made up his mind that he was to carry the Old Man of the Sea on his shoulders from that time forward. Percival hated to recall this feeling. He knew that it was not altogether unjust, yet now it seemed a horrible thing to have had such a thought of the poor old Squire, who had loved him, and who was dead. That evening he saw Sissy, and they kissed each other and parted. Good heavens! was it only four days since he said good-bye to Sissy! Or was it four years? Or four centuries! Thursday he was at Rookleigh. Where was Rookleigh? In some other planet, surely. The sleepy little town, with its formal trees, its white birds, its cloudless blue sky, came before his mind in wonderful fulness of detail. It was most vivid, yet most unreal, as if a man should have passed just one day amid the familiar scenery of a willow-patterned plate, should have walked over the queer little bridge we know so well, should have rested in the mansion beneath the heavily-fruited tree, and then come suddenly back to his English life again. So clear, and so incredible, was that day to Percival. And thinking of it he fell into a light, uneasy sleep, and dreamed that it was his grandfather's wedding day, and that the ceremony was to be performed in Rookleigh Church. But all was anxiety and confusion, for the bride was not ready, and the time was very short. Percival thought that he held Godfrey Hammond by the sleeve in the lych gate, and tried to warn him that the Shadwells' vault was not safe. Godfrey, however, laughed, and said it was all right; he

had put the Squire down there to wait till the bride should arrive, and the best man was standing on the entrance stone, to keep him from coming up till they were ready. Percival might have been astonished at such a method of disposing of the bridegroom, but at that moment he remembered that it was his wedding day too, and where was Sissy? And then followed a nightmare hunt for her, high and low. It was only ended by a sudden certainty, how acquired Percival could not tell, that Sissy was with the Squire, in the Shadwells' awful vault. He was not far from waking when he came to this point, and all the hideous horror of the thought flashed upon him. He could not see Sissy, he could not get at her, and yet her frightened eyes drove him to despair. He started up in bed to find himself still at Brackenhill, with the cloudless sky glowing through his window, the June sun crowning the tree-tops with gold, and the breezes softly whispering among the roses outside. The horrible fancy vanished. But surely it was not all a dream, something was going to happen—who was to be married that morning? With a quick grasp at realities, Percival remembered that this was the Squire's Golden Wedding day.

The Origin of Flowers.

IN the whole brilliant museum which lavish Nature opens so bountifully before the eyes of those who can see—a class unhappily far smaller than it ought to be, but growing from day to day as each neophyte opens in turn the sealed eyes of his neighbours—there is nothing so lovely as the bright and graceful flowers of our meadows, our hedgerows, and our gardens. There is nothing inanimate to which we turn with so tender and so loving a regard; nothing which we so instinctively invest with the attributes and emotions of the human soul. From the merest child and the varietal savage to the truest artist and the deepest philosopher, every heart has ever ready in its depths a thrill of delight in unison with those exquisite gems of God's handiwork. In a previous paper* I have endeavoured to trace this feeling to its varied sources in the minds of men, and to disentangle the many strands of simple and complex emotion which, when woven together, make up our total synthetic pleasure in the contemplation of a wayside posy. But in the analysis which I then undertook, it was necessary to accept the love of colour in itself as a given factor, whose origin we were content for the time to leave unexplained. There is reason to think, however, that the pleasure of simple colours, red and orange and yellow, green and violet and purple, which stands out as so distinct an element in our æsthetic nature, may be finally traced back to the remote effects of flowers and fruits upon the animal kingdom generally, and upon primitive man in particular. So far as the human species is concerned, there can be little doubt that our colour-sense depends more upon the golden rind of the orange, the crimson cheeks of the cherry, the melting tints of the mango and the peach, the blush of grapes and apples, or the ruddy glow of wayside berries, than upon the thousand beauties of English wild-flowers or the massive wealth of tropical blossoms. But if we would track the question to its very roots, we must go down first to the butterfly and the primrose, before we can understand the true relations of the bird or the mammal to the various fruits which attract them.

In short, we must push back our inquiry to-day to the ultimate origin of coloured bodies and of the colour-sense. If we look about us in the unsophisticated fields and valleys, we shall find that the ordinary hues of nature are green, brown, and blue. Only a few exceptional objects, like insects, birds, fruits, and flowers, are tinted with the brighter

* See the CORNHILL MAGAZINE for January, 1878.

dyes of scarlet, crimson, orange, and yellow. We shall see, on closer inspection, that every one of these organic bodies has been specially developed to meet the wants of animal eyes. We shall find that the flower has been given its brilliant corolla in order to attract the bee and the butterfly; that the fruit has acquired its glowing coat in order to lure on the bird and the mammal; and that the feathers, scales, and gaudy fur of these animate creatures themselves have a special relation to the nature of their food, their habits, and their surroundings. In other words, the beautiful colours of the external world, and the delight which conscious minds feel in their beauty, have both a common origin in the great principles of evolution and natural selection. Let us see what light can be shed upon this intricate question of their interdependence by the magnificent generalisations which science and humanity owe to Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin.

If we wish to get at the very origin of flowers, we must go a long way back in time to the earliest geological age; and we must look at the condition of those vast primeval forests in which terrestrial animal life made with trembling feet its first forward steps. We must imagine ourselves placed as spectators in the midst of a flora totally unlike any now existing on our earth—a flora which we can only picture to ourselves by its incomplete resemblance to a few surviving but antiquated forms. In the great tropical swamps whose refuse supplies the coal for our grates, there grew a thick herbage of ferns and club-mosses and strange green plants, but probably not a single distinguishable flower. It is true that a fair sprinkling among the vegetable productions of those luxuriant wilds belong to the botanical sub-kingdom of Phanerogams or flowering plants; but these few exceptions are almost all trees or shrubs of the pine and palm kinds, bearing the green cones or catkins which science recognises as inflorescences, but not the conspicuous bunches of coloured leaves which ordinary people know as flowers. In the forests which then bordered the great deltas of forgotten Amazons and Niles, it seems probable that no gleam of scarlet, blue, or purple ever broke the interminable sea of waving green. Uncanny trees, with sculptured or tessellated bark, raised their verdant heads high above the damp soil into which they thrust their armour-plated roots; huge horsetails swayed their jointed stems before the fiercer tempests raised by a younger and lustier sun; tree-ferns, screw-pines, and araucarias diversified the landscape with their quaint and symmetrical shapes;* while beneath, the rich decaying mould was carpeted with mosses, lichens, and a thousand creeping plants, all of them bearing the archaic stamp peculiar to these earliest developments of vegetable life: but nowhere could the eye of an imaginary visitor have lighted on a bright flower, a crimson fruit, or a solitary gaudily-painted butterfly. Green, and green, and green again,

* These names must only be accepted in a representative sense, as giving a modern reader the nearest familiar congener of the extinct forms.

on every side; the gaze would have rested, wherever it fell, upon one unbroken field of glittering verdure.

To put it simply, all the earliest plants belonged to the flowerless division of the vegetable kingdom; and though a few flowering species made their appearance on earth even before the epoch at which our coalbeds were formed, yet these were of the sort whose pollen is borne by the wind, and whose blossoms are accordingly unprovided with gay colours, or sweet scents, or honeyed secretions, as a bait for the insect visitor to rifle and fertilise their bloom. The greater part of the larger coal flora consisted of acrogens, that is to say, of plants like the ferns, club-mosses, and horsetails, which have spores instead of seeds, and so of course bear neither fruit nor flower. The smaller creeping plants belonged to the same class, or to the still more humble thallogens, represented in our world by lichens and seaweeds. Only a few conifers foreshadowed the modern tribes of flowering plants; and even these were of the most abnormal and antiquated type to be found in the whole sub-kingdom.

How, then, did those crimson, orange, or purple leaves which make up the popular idea of a flower first originate? And how did the seed which it is their object to produce, become coated with that soft, sweet, pulpy, and bright-coloured envelope which we call in every-day language a fruit? Clearly the first of these questions must be answered before we attack the second, both because the flower precedes the fruit in point of time, and because the tastes formed by the flower have become the *raison-d'être* of the fruit. I propose, therefore, in the present paper, to attempt some slight solution of the earlier problem; and I hope in a future number of the CORNHILL MAGAZINE to set before my readers some remarks upon the later one.

The origin of flowers is not a difficult subject upon which to hazard a plausible conjecture. Even in the flowerless plants we see occasionally some approach to that separate set of organs for reproductive purposes which reaches its fullest development in the coloured and scented blossoms of our gardens. Most ferns, as we all know, bear their spores on the under side of every frond, where some of them form the beautiful powder which gives a name and a charm to the gold and silver ferns. But the splendid *Osmunda regalis*, besides several smaller species, has its seed-vessels on an independent stem, thus exhibiting that division of labour among its parts which allows each more efficiently to perform its own special function. And the horsetails carry this movement one step further in advance, having a distinct fruit-bearing growth early in the spring, which is followed by sterile shoots later on in the year. So that through these faint indications we can picture dimly to ourselves the gradual stream of evolution by which the frond-borne spore made its first onward metamorphosis towards the flower-borne seed.

But such fructiferous heads of embryonic acrogens differ widely in the most important particular from true flowers. They do not need

fertilisation.* The very essence of the flower consists in the fact that its ovule, or embryo seed, must be quickened into fresh life by the contact of pollen, either from the same or another blossom. All the rest which we ordinarily think of as belonging to the flower—its bright petals, its sweet scent, its store of honey—are merely so many accessories to this central fact. The true flower begins at the point where pollen and ovules first make their appearance. And in the earliest geological flowering plants, the pollen was apparently wafted to the ovule on the wings of the wind, not on the heads or bodies of insects. They belonged to that coniferous family in which the seeds are borne on a scaly head, such as we know so familiarly in the pine and the fir-tree: so that their green scales could have formed no exception to the prevailing verdure of a paleozoic forest.

"But what advantage did the plant gain from this complicated arrangement of seed-producing organs?" A not unnatural question to ask, yet a very difficult one to answer. So far, only a speculative explanation of the facts has been attempted; and that speculation is too intricate and too fundamental for any but the trained physiologist to appreciate. Happily, however, the facts themselves have been placed beyond all doubt by Mr. Darwin's minute observations on *cross fertilisation*. Our great master has shown us that when any organism is the product of interaction between the parts of two other organisms, it possesses a vigour, plasticity, and vital power far surpassing that of any similar individual produced by one unaided parent. He has proved incontestably that young plants derived from a self-fertilised flower are weaker, poorer, and shabbier than those derived from the pollen of one flower and the ovule of another. And this general principle, illustrated on the small scale by Mr. Darwin's experiments, has been demonstrated on a gigantic scale by Nature herself: for when once the flowering plants were introduced upon the earth by a favourable combination of surrounding circumstances, their superior vitality enabled them in the struggle for existence to live down their flowerless neighbours, and to spread themselves slowly but surely over the whole habitable globe. While the flora of the coal and the earlier formations consists almost entirely of ferns, club-mosses, and horsetails, the surface of our existing earth is covered by grasses, herbs, and forest-trees; and only in a few tropical ravines or a stray patch of English warren do we still find the degenerate modern representatives of those Titanic calamites and lycopodites which flourished in the jungles of the Black Country a million years since.

We can guess, accordingly, how flowers, in the botanical sense, came first to be developed. Where a chance combination of external agencies

* The obscure phenomena connected with the antheridia and pistillidia of cryptogams do not interfere with the practical truth of this statement, accepted in a popular sense.

occurred to carry certain cast-off reproductive cells of one plant to the most exposed cells of another, there may have resulted such a race of hearty descendants, endowed with a similar tendency to produce their like in future, as could compete at an enormous advantage with the sexless and flowerless plants around. Vague and indefinite as our conception of this process must necessarily be, we can still figure to our imagination enough of its nature to find in it no miracle, but a simple physical fact. The next step in our inquiry must be to account for those bright and conspicuous masses of leaves which the popular eye recognises as flowers. To do so properly, we must glance first at the few animals and insects which peopled the green palæozoic forests, and whose descendants were to prove the principal agents in developing the blossoms and fruits that we see around us.

Few if any birds or mammals lived amongst those rank jungles of more than tropical growth. Reptiles of serpentine or lizard-like form crawled through their dense underbrush of club-moss and lichens; while primitive scorpions, beetles, and cockroaches eked out a hard-earned livelihood by devouring smaller prey, or by feeding on the more succulent parts of the dry and horny plants around them; but not a single moth or butterfly flitted among the primæval tree-ferns and pines, as they flit in countless myriads now on the banks of the Amazon or the mountain slopes of Ceylon and Jamaica.* The higher and brighter forms of insect life are entirely dependent upon the honey or other secretions of flowers, and without flowers they could not continue to exist for a day, much less come for the first time into existence.

As soon, however, as any flowering-plants at all began to show themselves on the face of the earth, if only in the form of cones or green panicles, we may be sure that they were visited for the purpose of feeding by some of the smaller insects of those days. The pollen and other parts of the incipient blossom would almost certainly attract attention both by their softness and their nutritious properties. We shall see hereafter, when we come to examine the case of fruits, that those very portions of plants which are devoted to the growth of their offspring are the exact portions best fitted for animals to devour and thrive upon. And as the insects would carry away small quantities of the pollen, adhering to their legs and heads, they would be very likely to deposit some part of it on the stickier portion of similar blossoms which they afterwards visited. Any flower that offered exceptional advantages to

* Those readers who have personally made acquaintance with tropical scenery will be able to recognise in the picture of green forests given above a strong family likeness to the existing vegetation in the warmer zones of our earth. It is a great mistake to suppose that the tropics are noticeable for their brilliant colouring. Here and there, under exceptional circumstances, one may light upon a solitary tree covered by huge scarlet or yellow flowers, of a kind which we seldom see in temperate climates; but the general aspect of a tropical hillside is that of monotonous and wearisome verdure.

such visitors in the way of food, would thus be able to substitute the new mode of fertilisation by means of insects, for the old one by means of the wind. Moreover, this substitution would prove economical to the plant, because wind-fertilised flowers require a large number of stamens and pistils, hanging out in conspicuous situations, so that the pollen may be borne away upon the breeze in sufficient quantities to fertilise a large proportion of the neighbouring blossoms. Of course such a system is comparatively wasteful and expensive to the parent plants, since they are obliged to produce vast quantities of pollen, which will be dissipated ineffectually by the wind, and vast quantities of ovules, which are never destined to receive the quickening influence of the pollen. Now, every device which enables a plant or animal to perform any one of its necessary functions at a less physiological cost than formerly will obviously leave it a greater surplus of energy to be expended in other directions, and will thus prove of use to it in that long and ceaseless struggle which eventuates in the survival of the fittest. Accordingly, if any special combination of circumstances at any particular time happened to give one plant such a structure that its pollen was specially sheltered from the wind and specially attractive to insects, while at the same time its ovules were placed within a specially sticky receptacle, adapted to retain any pollen grains which might fall upon it—then that plant and its descendants would enjoy such exceptional advantages as would enable them to live down their less fortunate neighbours, and to become the ruling vegetable races of the world. What might be the special causes which first gave rise to such a structure we can hardly even conjecture; but that they did occur, and, having occurred, produced the result above sketched out, we know with a considerable degree of certainty from the mere inspection of nature as it unfolds itself to inquiring eyes at the present day.

So soon as certain plants have thus begun to depend upon the visits of insects as a means of fertilisation, a competition will naturally spring up between them for the favour of their little guests. Hence it will happen that any flower which has in its neighbourhood patches of bright-coloured leaves, or which disperses odorous particles from its surface, will be benefited by the additional attractions it offers, and will be oftener fertilised, on the average of cases, than any less alluring blossom. But how will these colours originally present themselves? I believe it was Mr. Herbert Spencer who first pointed out that the undeveloped leaves at the ends of a long shoot have a great tendency to assume a reddish or purple hue; and that such terminal bunches are exactly the places where inflorescence occurs. Long before, Wolff and Goethe had shown that the flower consists essentially of several whorls of aborted or oddly-developed leaves. And Mr. Spencer suggested that wherever such coloured immature shoots contained the seed-producing organs, they might offer an additional means of attracting insects, and might thus become more and more distinctly coloured from generation to

generation, until they reached their present noticeable form. If we look closely into this matter, we may perhaps be enabled clearly to understand the various steps by which this development of colour in flowers was brought about.

All common leaves contain a green pigment, known to chemists as *chlorophyll*, from which they derive their ordinary colour. The cells of the leaf are stored with this pigment, while their transparent walls give them that superficial sheen which we notice so distinctly in the glossy foliage of the laurel and the bright fronds of the hart's-tongue fern. But very slight chemical changes in the composition of leaves suffice to give them a different colour; which is not surprising when we recollect that colour is nothing more than light, reflected in greater or less proportions of its constituent waves. The fashionable pelargoniums, coleuses, and begonias, or the dark sedums which are employed to form the quaint carpet-gardens so much in vogue, show us how easily the green colouring-matter can be replaced by various shades of purple, red, and brown. These changes seem on the whole to be connected with some deficient nutrition of the foliage.* It would appear that the normal and healthy pigment is a rich green; but that as the leaf fades and dies, it passes through successive stages of orange, pink, and russet. The autumn tints of the forest, the crimson hues of the Virginian creeper, and the transitory colours of a dying plant, all show us these passing *nuances*. If a single leaf, or even a particular spot upon a leaf, is insufficiently supplied with nutriment, its first symptom of ill-health is a tendency to paleness or jaundiced yellowness. If an insect turns some portion of it into a gall nut or a blight, the tips assume a beautiful pink hue. In short, any constitutional weakness in the leaf brings about changes in its contained pigments which result in an altered mode of reflecting light. Or, to put the same fact in another way, any change in the composition of the pigments is apt to be accompanied by a change in their colour. Now the ends of long branches are naturally the least nurtured portions of a plant, and the young leaves formed at such spots have a great tendency to assume a brown or pinky hue. Furthermore, these spots are exactly the places where flowers are formed; flowers being, as we saw above, mere collections of aborted leaves, destined to fulfil the function of parents for future generations at the point where the vigorous growth of the original plant is beginning to fail. Nothing can be more natural, therefore, than that the flower-leaves should show an original tendency to exhibit brilliant hues: a tendency which would of course be strengthened by natural selection if it gave the plant and its descendants any superiority over others in the struggle for life.

It should be remembered, too, that the flower differs from the leaf in the fact that it is not self-supporting. The green portions of a plant

* I purposely avoid all reference to the purely technical question of the relation between chlorophyll and erythrophyll.

are its mouths and stomach : they are perpetually engaged in assimilating from the air and the water those elements which are fitted for its growth. But the flower is a purely expensive structure : it does not feed itself ; it is fed by other portions of the plant. It uses up, in the act of growing and expanding, energies derived from the food which has been stored up by the chlorophyll elsewhere. Accordingly, we might expect its pigment to present that less energetic, more worn-out form, which produces the brighter hues of autumn and the pink tips of a growing bough. From whatever point of view we regard it, we see that a flower is naturally supplied with some colouring matter less active than that green substance which forms the assimilative agency in common leaves. It is easy, therefore, to guess how certain plants may have acquired the first tinge of colour around their organs of fructification, and thus have attracted the eyes of insects by their superior brilliancy.

This, however, is only one side of the problem. We can imagine how leaves may have become coloured to attract insects, but we do not yet see why insects should be attracted by coloured leaves. Side by side with the development of colour in flowers must have gone the development of a colour-sense in insects. The creatures which strayed through the green carboniferous brushwood were doubtless endowed with eyes, sensitive in a considerable degree to light in its varying shades, and to visible form ; but there is little reason to suppose that they were capable of distinguishing between red and blue. We know of nothing in their external circumstances which would have made such a faculty of any value to them ; and we have now learnt that every structure presupposes some advantage to be gained by its development. On the other hand, Sir John Lubbock's experiments and observations upon bees leave us little room to doubt that the higher insects, at least, now possess considerable discriminativeness for colours, in a manner which does not differ greatly from our own. Sir John discovered that a bee habitually fed from a piece of paper of a particular colour, would at once select that colour from a considerable number of others, thereby demonstrating the essential identity of its senses with those of human beings. Now, it was pointed out above that colour means physically nothing more than particular kinds of light-waves ; and, accordingly, the perception of colour means nothing more than a special susceptibility of individual nerves for the reception of particular light-waves. What can be more natural than that a body so modifiable as nerve-substance should show an aptitude for accommodating itself to slight differences in the external agencies which affect it ? Accordingly, we can easily imagine how the small insects of the paleozoic world may have soon acquired a power of discriminating vaguely the red and purple ends of shoots where pollen and soft nutriment were to be found from the comparatively innutritious green and horny portions of the plant. Once this power had begun to exist, the two must continue to develop side by side. Those plants which had the most conspicuous blossoms must have best attracted the insects

around them; and those insects which were most strongly attracted by conspicuous blossoms must have fed most easily and lived most persistently. The bee, flying straight from flower to flower, shows us the accuracy which is reached at last in this mutual adaptation of the one to the other.

The facts of geology sufficiently prove that such has been really the case. From age to age we can trace, among the few remains which survive for our inspection, a gradual spread of flowering plants and a gradual growth of flower-fed insects. Step by step they go on advancing, until at last we get the wonderful modifications of each to each which have been traced out in detail by Mr. Darwin, Sir John Lubbock, the Müllers, and countless other earnest interpreters of nature. These modern teachers have shown us how the lip of the flower has been shaped for the bee to alight; how the honey has been secreted at the very end of an ambrosial labyrinth; and how the pollen has been placed just where the hairy forehead of the insect will brush gently against it, and carry it off in a powdery mass or in a sticky club. And they have noted how, simultaneously, the legs and body of the bee have grown adapted to the exact shape of the lip and bell; how the senses have been quickened to perceive the colour and the odour; and how the proboscis has lengthened itself to the very dimensions of that ambrosial labyrinth which leads in its inmost recesses to the prize of honey. They have told us, too, how in many cases a particular insect has adapted itself to a particular plant, while the plant in return has laid itself out to deserve and secure the good services of that specific insect. In short, they have taught us to see such a minute interdependence of animal and vegetable life as had never before been dreamt of in the whole history of natural science.

Leaving out of consideration for the present those modes in which flowers and insects have been mutually modified in shape to meet one another's convenience, let us look more closely at those various ways in which the flower has been adapted to the senses of the insect, while the senses, in return, have been strengthened and developed by the properties of the flower. There are three principal means by which this interaction takes place, namely, by the senses of taste, of smell, and of sight. We shall examine all three in order, and we shall notice as we do so how singular is the bond of connection between the lower and higher forms of life; for we shall find that our own likes and dislikes in taste, smell, and colour, can be traced down with great plausibility to the exactly similar likes and dislikes of bees and butterflies. It will aid us in explaining and comprehending this connection if we remember that what flowers are to insects, fruits are to birds and mammals. Both are coloured, scented, and sweet; but they have acquired their various allurements for the attraction of widely different creatures. Yet it shows the general community of structure and function running through the whole animal world, that the very same sweet tastes, fragrant perfumes, and bright

hues appeal in the very same way to bees and butterflies as they appeal to parrots, to humming-birds, and to men.

First, then, as to taste. The need for food is, of course, the primary allurements in every case, both of the fruit and of the flower. The scents and colours are only useful as guiding the seeker to his dainty meal. In the earliest times, doubtless, the insect prowlers who carried pollen from head to head regaled themselves upon the actual juices of the plant, which in all fairness should have gone to provide for the general needs of the flower and seed. But plants must soon have learnt the trick of letting a little of their more nutritious juice exude of its own accord, at once as a bait to draw the insect fertiliser, and as a security against his breaking in upon the tissues themselves. This juice is what we know as honey. Many parts of plants contain small quantities of sugar, and in some (like the sugar-cane and the American maple) it exists in large proportions in the sap; but wherever we find it deposited in the concentrated form of honey, we may be sure that the plant has distilled it for some special purpose of attraction. Honey-glands sometimes occur on the stem, in which case they are often mere traps to attract the presence of ants, who act as guards to the plant against the approach of noxious insects. But more commonly they are to be found in the flower; that is to say, somewhere among the whorls of stunted leaves which surround the seed-producing structures. There they are set as insect-attractors, to draw the fertilising agents into the neighbourhood of the pollen and the ovules. Of course we can only suppose that this production of special honey-secreting organs proceeded very slowly during long ages, parallel with the development of specialised honey-seeking insects. And we have some warrant for the belief—more fully to be set forth in a subsequent paragraph—that some of the greatest honey-storing plants are quite modern denizens of our earth, and owe their existence to the general demand for sweet-stuffs amongst their insect contemporaries. Similarly, we have reason to think that the honey-eaters have gone on adapting themselves more and more continuously to the flowers, until at last, in the fulness of time, we get such specialised creatures as hive-bees and humming-birds. But perhaps the most noticeable fact of all is this—that the very same sweet juice which was developed to suit the taste of humble-bees and emperor-moths, is the symbol for sweetness in the language of mankind, whose tastes have been formed upon the strawberry, the plum, and the banana. And is it not likewise significant of the same general community of nervous impressibility that while the humming-birds, belonging to a mainly fruit-eating class, have taken to the honey of bignonia and hibiscus, the wasps, in turn, belonging to a mainly honey-eating class, have taken to the sugary juices of the peach and the nectarine? I think these facts may guide us greatly when we come to ask how the love of colour has been devolved in the human race.

Secondly, as to smell. So soon as flowers have developed the honey-producing structures, they will gain an advantage by giving insects at a

distance some warning of their presence. There is no simpler way of doing this than by means of etherialised particles, which may chemically affect some exposed nervous structure in the insect; and such chemically affected structures are what we know as organs of smell. Here, too, we see the same essential agreement between the higher and lower forms of animal life; for just as our taste for sweets corresponds to the insect's taste for honey, so our love for the perfume of flowers is absolutely identical with the pleasure which draws the butterfly towards the luscious blossoms of the tuberose and the stephanotis. In our own English meadows we may see the bees and the children alike, collected around the fragrant meadow-sweet, or seeking together for the scented clover. And it is worth while to observe that most of the sweet-smelling flowers appear to be quite late developments of vegetable life, a fact which harmonises well with the correspondingly late development of the bees and other highly-adapted honey-suckers. There is no tribe of plants, for example, more noticeable for their perfume than the family of Labiates. To this family belong the various kinds of mint, thyme, balm, sage, marjoram, lavender, rosemary, horehound, and calamint, besides innumerable foreign or little-noticed species, like patchouli, hyssop, and basil. These plants are almost all very peculiarly shaped and highly scented, and their attractiveness for bees has become proverbial—the honey of poetry is always “redolent of thyme.” Now the Labiates, so far as known, are late tertiary plants; that is to say, they made their first appearance upon earth only a short period before the advent of man himself. In short, it was not until bees and other specialised honey-suckers had reached a high point of development that scented flowers began to possess any advantage over their neighbours. I shall endeavour to show in a future paper that our chief fruit-bearers, the Rosaceae, are similarly late in making an appearance on the earth, and that they owe their evolution to the higher birds and frugivorous mammals who began to exist in large numbers about the same period. For the present it will be sufficient to point out the intimacy of the interdependence which we thus see to exist between the evolution of the animal and vegetable worlds.

It is needful, too, to point out another special case of the sense of smell. While the flower-sucking insects have likes and dislikes, in taste and smell, essentially identical with those of man, the descendant of frugivorous ancestors, and with those of the flower-sucking humming-birds, and the fruit-eating birds and mammals, there is another class of carrion-feeding insects which have likes and dislikes more in unison with the vultures, the turkey-buzzards, and the jackals. Since it is possible for life to be sustained upon decaying animal matter, it must result that some small class possessing the unusual taste for carrion will be able to gain an easy living upon this undisputed prey. Hence the growth of such uncanny creatures as flies, condors, and sopilotes. Accordingly, we find certain flowers adapting themselves to these abnormal tastes, and

acquiring the appearance and smell of decaying meat. The Sumatran *Rafflesia*, and the South African *Hydnora*, are large and lurid blossoms, which thus deceitfully induce the carrion flies to visit them for the purpose of laying their eggs, and are accordingly fertilised by means of an organised deception. To naturally frugivorous man the scent and the appearance are alike disgusting.

Lastly, we arrive at the device of colour, the most important of all from an æsthetic standpoint. We have seen already how reds, yellows, and purples came to be developed in the neighbourhood of the floral reproductive organs, but we have yet to inquire why they should prove attractive and pleasurable to the eyes of insects. In order to do so properly, we must glance a little at the nature of pleasure generally.

Without entering into any ultimate physiological question, it will suffice for our present purpose to point out that pleasure results from the normal stimulation of any fully-nurtured and underworked nervous structure. For instance, in a state of health, our limbs, when properly fed and not previously fatigued, derive pleasure from the mere act of exercise. So with each of our senses; any particular stimulation is pleasant if it has been sufficiently intermitted, and is not excessive in amount. Now, if we apply this simple principle to the case of sight, we shall see that so soon as the eyes of insects have been differentiated enough to discriminate the pinkish or ruddy tips of boughs from the green leaves about them, the special nerves involved in this process will receive pleasure from their due stimulation. The more intermittent each such stimulation may be, the more pleasurable will be the resulting sensation. So we can see how, as the petals of flowers grew gradually more and more distinguishable in colour from the green leaves about them, and as the eyes of primordial bees or butterflies grew gradually to distinguish them better and better, an ever-increasing pleasure would grow gradually up by their side, and become stronger and stronger as the nerves increased by practice in calibre and strength. And so, too, we can understand how at last we reach the pure and brilliant colouring of the gladiolus, the laburnum, the hyacinth, the peony, and the tulip; and how the insect eye is drawn on by the pleasure hence arising to the nectary of the flower, and to the pollen or the stigma from which the future seed is to take its rise.

Here too, in like manner, we may observe the practical identity of taste in the flower-feeding insects and the fruit-eating vertebrates—including the human species, who, as we have already noticed, derive their likes and dislikes from their frugivorous ancestors. For, just as the sweetness of fruits answers to the sweetness of honey, and just as the scent of fruits answers to the scent of flowers, so the colours of fruits are identical in origin and nature with the colours of flowers. It would seem as though in every case nature found a single mode of modifying the nervous substance was amply sufficient (because simplest and easiest) alike for insect and reptile, for bird and ape and human being.

As for the particular colour of each particular species, litile is known as yet of its determining causes. In a few cases we can plausibly account for the special hue selected; thus the plants which depend for fertilisation upon carrion insects naturally imitate the lurid red appearance, as well as the noisome smell, of putrid meat; while the night-flowering blossoms are apt to be white or bright yellow, as those colours best reflect the scanty light of evening or the scattered rays of the moon. But in the majority of instances we can scarcely hazard a conjecture as to the reasons which have influenced insects in their unconscious selection. It must suffice to point out that in many cases the spots, lines, and bars on the flower seem to act as guides for the insect in discovering the exact locality of the honey-store, while in others they are placed for some purpose of mimicry which is directly or indirectly useful to the species. With this brief indication of a great field for future inquiry, we may pass on to some other interesting aspects of the colour-sense as applied to flowers.*

As the object of the coloured whorls is merely to attract the attention of insects, it does not matter, of course, which particular whorl is supplied with pigment in each instance. It is only needful that the bunch of coloured leaves should be so placed as to guide the insect towards the pollen and ovules. Hence we find a great variety in the portions of flowers which are thus decorated with brilliant tints. The stamens and pistil themselves rarely take part in this function of attraction, though sometimes even these working organs are brightly painted with pink, yellow, or pearly white. In such plants as the mallow, the bramble, the tulip, the fuchsia, the mignonette, and the clematis, the stamens and pistil form very conspicuous portions of the attractive organ. More frequently, however, the corolla, or petal-whorl, which succeeds the fructifying structures, is alone entrusted with the special function of alluring insects by its hue. This is the case with the buttercup, the pink, the pea-tribe, the rose, the poppy, the violet, and the great mass of ordinary flowers in general. Indeed, one may say roughly that the popular conception of a flower is mainly founded upon the corolla, while the botanical idea of an inflorescence is mainly founded upon the stamens and pistil. But in a considerable number of plants the colouring of the corolla is not by itself sufficient to allure the fertilising visitors, and so the calyx, or outer whorl, originally a protective sheath for the blossom, is sometimes diverted wholly or in part to this secondary function. In the milk-wort we see an early stage of such a process, where only a portion of the calyx is devoted to the purpose of allurements; but in the fuchsia it is the calyx which forms the principal and most brightly-coloured feature on the whole flower. Then again, a large number of

* Those who wish to find out how much is already known on this curious point of special adaptations may turn to Mr. Darwin's work on *Orchids*, or to Sir John Lubbock's on *British Wildflowers in their relation to Insects*.

blossoms have only a single duplicate whorl to represent both calyx and corolla, in which case we sometimes conclude that the two original whorls have coalesced, and sometimes that the plant never possessed more than one. Instances are to be found in the tulip, the hyacinth, and most so-called lilies. Lastly, we have in the arum a white or purple sheath which encloses a whole group of little inconspicuous blossoms, but performs exactly the same function as the petals in attracting the insect eye.

The most conclusive fact, however, in favour of the purely functional origin here assigned to the coloured leaves is to be found in the case of certain plants, whose true flower, being small and inconspicuous, is surrounded by an irregular supplementary mass of brilliant leaves. The best known instance of this peculiarity is the scarlet poinsettia, which has an insignificant little yellow blossom, so small that it could hardly strike even the microscopic eye of a tropical butterfly. But the comparative poorness of the true flower is made up for by a magnificent bunch of scarlet leaves, which terminate every flower-bearing branch, and are far more striking than the yellow blossom could ever hope to become, even if immensely increased in size and brilliancy. In the midst of this scarlet bunch the flowers nestle securely, and trouble themselves no more about the disposal of their pollen. An equally instructive though less beautiful example is offered by a little West Indian plant, whose tiny blossom is surrounded by three green bracts, while the upper surface of each bract has a patch of red pigment, daubed, as it were, over its face. If you turn up the leaf, you see that the pigment does not penetrate to its lower surface, so that at first you have great difficulty in rejecting the belief that some mischievous painter has been playing you a trick by deftly spreading a little patch of colour in the centre of each bract. Of course the conclusion towards which all these facts point is a very simple one—namely, that if a tendency to the production of bright colours in the neighbourhood of the reproductive organs is once set up, no matter in what portion of the plant it may occur (whether in stamens, corolla, calyx, sheath, bracts, or leaves), it will be perpetually strengthened and further developed by natural selection, provided it proves useful to the plant in promoting cross fertilisation through the agency of insects.

Nor does the process stop here. Some flowers are not sufficiently conspicuous to attract separate attention on their own account, but they manage to do so by massing themselves together in considerable bunches. This massing can be simply effected, as Mr. Herbert Spencer has pointed out, if the internodes (or pieces of stem between each blossom) are permitted to become dwarfed. We see the first instance of such dwarfing in a spike,* like that of the foxglove, the snapdragon, the gladiolus,

* I must warn the reader that I am intentionally and consistently avoiding the cut-and-dried phraseology of botany, in favour of simpler, though less exact terms.

and the orchid. In the head, the dwarfing has proceeded a step further, as exemplified by clover. To one or other of these or similar classes belong those conspicuous bunches of blossom which we find on the lilac, the horse-chestnut, the wisteria, the laburnum, the rhododendron, and indeed, almost all our most noticeable flower-bearing plants, domestic or exotic. The umbellate family, represented by fool's parsley, carrot, and cow-parsnip, attain the same end in a slightly different way. Their small white flowers are grouped together in a flat mass, on the end of a stiff stem, while the outermost blossoms of each mass have much larger white corollas than those of the central ones, thus affording a greater total of attractive area.* But in the composite flowers we see this tendency pushed almost to its extreme limits. These blossoms, of which the daisy is a familiar example, consist of an immense number of separate florets, crowded densely together into a head, and enclosed by a bunch of bracts, known as the involucre, which performs the same protective function for the compound mass as the calyx performs for a separate flower. Each single floret would doubtless fail by itself to secure enough insect attention for safe fertilisation; but when thus huddled together into a conspicuous head, they have proved very successful plants, forming probably the largest and most populous family of the vegetable kingdom at the present day.

If we look still closer at the individual members of this last-named family, the composites, we shall see yet more ingenious devices for attracting attention by multiplied bunches, or by special arrangement of florets. In the simplest form of composite, which we find in the thistle and the artichoke, all the florets are of the same size and similarly coloured. But in the centaury, the outer florets begin to grow larger than their neighbours of the central mass, thus affording a greater total area of alluring colour. In the corn-marigold, again, the outer florets assume the shape of elongated rays, but still retain the same yellow hue as the central bells. Next, in the daisy, the rays are of a brilliant white, and the central bells a beautiful yellow; while in the camomile, heads composed of these twin-shaped florets are arranged in bunches, instead of growing each on a separate stalk. These last-named heads closely simulate the appearance of single blossoms, as the long white rays which surround their clustered central bells may easily be mistaken for petals by a careless observer. There are two other well-known composites

He will learn with pleasure from any botanical critic that the proper expression in this case would have been a *raceme*. Having made this apology once for all, I trust I may be permitted to continue unmolested in a tongue understood of the people.

* I cannot entirely agree with Mr. Herbert Spencer that this difference is solely due to freer elbow-room and more abundant light. The case of a common English centaury, whose outer florets are sometimes much larger than the inner ones, while at other times they are of exactly the same size, shows that we must make great allowances for the selective action of insects. Were the effect due to position alone, it would occur in all specimens alike.

which exhibit the same tendency to increased conspicuousness in a different way. The bunches of the milfoil, each of which is separately too insignificant to attract attention, are arranged on a number of umbels, which make in the mass a compound head of heads, while those of the golden-rod are disposed on a tall shaft, so as to form a waving plume of floret-bundles. To put it more simply, when individual flowers are too small to prove separately attractive, they derive an advantage from grouping themselves into masses, and when the masses thus composed become in turn too small for effective display, they succeed by once more grouping themselves into compound bunches of masses.

Before we conclude this lengthy investigation, there is one more point upon which I should like to dwell for a moment. While the colours of flowers are apparently due in the main to insects, I believe it to be equally true that the colours of insects are indirectly due to the influence of flowers. We observed above that any set of nervous structures habitually excited in a certain manner becomes thereby strengthened and improved, so as to be capable in future of healthy and pleasurable stimulation. Now, as insects are perpetually seeking their food amongst bright-coloured flowers, it follows that their eyes must have become specially sensitive to the attraction of brilliant light. We get the extreme case of such attraction in the mechanical infatuation which draws the moth irresistibly into the burning embrace of the flame. We get it in a less violent form amongst those nocturnal insects like the fire-flies, which are provided with lanterns to guide the opposite sex to their sides. And there seems reason to believe that those insects which feed habitually upon the beautiful flowers have acquired a taste for colour, which leads them to select mates resembling the flowers in hue. I hope to enter more fully into this subject when we come to treat of the development of fruits; but at present a brief outline of the principal facts which support the theory now advanced may be given shortly by anticipation.

Among the invertebrates, there are no creatures more exquisitely coloured than the butterflies, which are flower-feeders. Those of tropical countries are more brightly tinted than the denizens of northern climes, and exactly the same is true of the flowers. In some special regions, particularly islands such as Madagascar, the flowers and the butterflies are both equally noticeable for their brilliant hues. On the other hand, if we look at their relations, the moths, which are nocturnal in their habits, and feed often upon large whitish or yellowish blossoms, we shall see that their shades are generally dull and dusky, varying from whitey-brown to dingy-black. So too, the carrion-feeding flies are not marked by any such beautiful hues as the honey-feeding butterflies. Indeed, a general glance through the insect world will probably convince us that wherever their colours are not due to protective or imitative devices they are traceable to sexual selection, acting by means of tastes, which take their origin in the attractive hues of flowers.

Similarly amongst vertebrates, the most exquisitely coloured are the birds, and amongst the birds, the palm of beauty must be given to the humming-birds, which are flower-feeders. Next may rank the sun-birds of the Eastern hemisphere, which are also flower-feeders. And after them come a whole mass of tropical species, the birds of paradise, the toucans, the macaws, the parrots, the cockatoos, all of which feed upon bright-coloured fruits. And in the case of the bower-birds we know with certainty that a love for colour as colour exists, because these queer little creatures actually take possession of all the brilliant objects they can find to decorate their meeting places. All these instances lead one to suppose that the colours of birds are due to a liking for pure tints, originally derived from the nature of their food, and afterwards extended to the choice of mates.

When we compare the birds of prey and the carrion-feeding vultures with these bright creatures, we get an instance exactly analogous to that of the flies and the butterflies. So, in like manner, the dingy nocturnal owls are the obvious counterpart, amongst birds, of the whitish or gray-coated moths. Indeed there is a good physiological reason for believing the owls to be destitute of the colour-sense altogether, since a particular kind of nerve terminals in the eye (known to anatomists as the *cones*, and supposed to be the special organs of colour perception) are totally wanting in these night birds, which is only what one might expect in the case of creatures who sit at home all day, and only prowl about in the grey twilight.

Without pushing this speculation, then, to any further length at present, we may recognise as probable the theory that while insects have developed the colours of flowers, flowers have reciprocated the attention by becoming the *raison d'être* for the colours of insects.

G. A.

The Menad's Grave.

THE girl who once on Phrygian heights,
 Around the sacred grove of pines,
 Would dance through whole tempestuous nights,
 When no moon shines,
 Whose pipe of lotos featly blown
 Gave airs as shrill as Cotys' own
 Who, crowned with flowers of ivy dark,
 Three times drained deep through amorous lips
 The wine-fed bowl of willow bark
 With silver tips,
 Nor sank, nor ceased, but shouted still
 Like some wild wind from hill to hill;
 She lies at last where poplars wave
 Their sad gray foliage all day long;
 The river murmurs near her grave
 Its soothing song.
 Farewell, it saith; her life has done
 With frenzy at the set of sun.

EDMUND W. GOSSE.

Athenæus.

THE comic poet, Eupolis, is reported to have said of Pindar's verses, that even in his time they were already neglected and put to silence, through the distaste of the people for polite learning. But the fate of the famous lyric poet of Thebes is "tarts and gilt gingerbread," as the Spaniards say, compared to that of most of the authors quoted by Athenæus. Of Pindar, we have at least the *Epinicia*, or Triumphal Odes, entire, though it is impossible to determine how many of his pæans, dithyrambs, dancing songs, and dirges the ancient public willingly let die. But beyond the meagre excerpts which Athenæus made from more than eight hundred writers of what is called the Middle Comedy, little or nothing of these numerous authors now remains. Timocles wrote at least nineteen plays, of which we have scarce so many dozen lines, and yet from what appears in these of vigour of treatment, purity of style, and sarcastic allusion, his dramas were well worth preserving. The same may be said of Xenarchus, his contemporary, and of Theophilus, and of how many more? Alexis, too, who wrote pieces which may be classed with the new comedy, was the author of over two hundred dramas, but he is quite a stranger to all except the readers of Athenæus.

To Athenæus, then, should the spirits of all these men be grateful, if any gratitude or care of fame exist among the dead, for it is owing only to him, or to him chiefly, that their names may be still read, set on the northern side of that icy hill on which, Chaucer tells us, the beautiful beryl house of Fame is built, and not on the southern, where the hot sun thaws the writing and melts the letters, so that fame waxes infamous, and men say, "What may ever last?" To him they owe it that theirs are not now among that mighty crew of forgotten reputations in the moon, reputations long since eaten by Time on earth, but in those far fields associating with lost lovers' sighs, vain dreams of delight, idle thanksgivings, and unavailing prayers. Athenæus, though a poor poet, has been for them that white swan which bore the little medals Time cut from their threads of life away from the ugly birds flying about the banks of Lethe, and carried them to the Temple of Immortality.

Athenæus was born at Naucratis, on the left side of the Canopic mouth of the Nile. So much he tells us himself, but of the events of his life nothing is known. The precise epoch of his birth, as of his death, is doubtful. He seems to have completed his only extant work in the reign of Alexander Severus, and was certainly a contemporary of the second Antonine. He is called by Suidas a rhetorician and grammarian, by the latter of which terms is to be comprehended not only one acquainted

with grammatical difficulties, or a philologist, but also an essayist and a philosopher. It most nearly corresponds to what, in the present day, is known as a "literary man." He wrote a work on the Kings of Syria, and perhaps others, but that only one which remains is the remarkable medley entitled the *Deipnosophists*, a term which has been variously interpreted as "Men cunning in kitchen matters," "Those who philosophise at dinner," "The Sophists at table," "The contrivers of feasts," "The learned guests," or most commonly, and maybe, least correctly, "The banquet of the learned." The book presents a curious mosaic of erudite matter, which the "father of the book," as his epitomist calls him, had assembled and gathered together from his extensive and multifarious reading. Here we have the gleanings of his leisure, the harvest of his labour. It is a kind of encyclopædia or universal *répertoire* of items of prodigious variety, and some of them of marvellous richness and value. Despised it may be by his contemporaries as a mere compilation, for us it has all the value of an original work. For us, the authors, or the greater portion of them from whom he quotes, exist unhappily no longer; their works have been consumed by the rust of careless ignorance, or destroyed by the fire and famine of fanaticism. His quotations, it may be well supposed, are unfortunately not always exact. In passages from Aristotle and Theophrastus, he is certainly very often wrong. He reminds the reader of Bacon. Like his, Athenæus' quotations are very numerous, and also like his, seem in half the number of cases to have been made rather from some memorandum-book than from the original authors.

"No writing of the ancients, as far as I can remember," says Isaac Casaubon, "has been more cruelly treated by time." Of the fifteen books which now compose the *Deipnosophists*, the first two, the beginning of the third, and the greater part of the last are epitomes of which the date and author are alike unknown. Schweighäuser, with little probability, supposes they might be the work of Athenæus himself. That the epitomist lived before Eustathius is certain, for the good Archbishop of Thessalonica copies the errors of these abridgments, excerpts, or *parecbolæ* as the author calls them with faithful exactitude. But time was not content with cutting off the head and feet of the unfortunate volume, it also dislocated its limbs, and raged against the bulk itself of the book with such fury, as to leave it for posterity riddled like a Huntley and Palmer's biscuit. Little by little, however, since Aldus, to whom so many Greek writers owe their life, first discovered this ancient field to the public in the beginning of the sixteenth century, the labours of Turnebus and Passerat, of Muret and Scaliger, of Salmasius and Casaubon have cleared away the thorns and darnel which grew everywhere rank and high, its parts have been restored to proper order, its openings happily filled up with succedaneous conjecture, until Schweighäuser and Dindorf have brought it as near perfection as it is ever, in all probability, likely to come.

The first translation of importance was that of De la Champ, a French physician, who devoted his leisure time to this difficult undertaking, and deserves more credit for his work than has been usually allotted to him—*Pium est profiteri per quem profeceris*. The famous Abbé de Marolles turned the labours of Dalecampius, written in Latin, into his own language about the middle of the seventeenth century. All the mistakes of Dalecampius are, of course, to be found repeated here, besides several which the worthy Abbé has introduced on his own account. It is perhaps needless to add that "he persuades himself he has not wandered from his author's meaning, but completely preserved it." The only other translator of any note is Lefebvre de Villebrune, who, towards the close of the eighteenth century, published an edition of Athenæus, with notes chiefly remarkable for their acrimonious and too often causeless abuse of Casaubon, against which acute commentator he appears to have nurtured the most inveterate antipathy. It may be allowed that his book is both elegant and faithful, but unfortunately where it is faithful it is not elegant, and where it is elegant it is not faithful.

The *Deipnosophists* constitutes, next to the *Demonax* of Lucian, the earliest collection of anapa. It is an inexhaustible mine of amusing antiquarian research. These convivial words of the wise seem the contents of a common-place book, kept by a man about equally interested in eating and erudition. Here we have the origin of the Servile War, and there the most savoury way of cooking sucking-pigs, here pieces of poetry touching on pistachio-nuts and periwinkles, and there descriptions of the echoing halls of the Homeric kings. Birds, beasts, and fishes, to which last subject the seventh book is entirely devoted, are presented to the reader in picturesque confusion. Now he listens to medical opinions on diet, now to maxims of morality, now to the manners of private life. Poets occupy his attention alternately with pot-herbs, cooks with kings, oysters with orators, grammar with the grey mullet. The Greek Varro, or Pliny, as he is called by Casaubon, whose celebrated commentary constitutes a folio of no inconsiderable magnitude, had certainly little in common with the spirit of order which presided over and informed the Natural History of the voracious philosopher of Verona, however nearly allied to him he may have been in his extent of learning, anxiety for information, and varied experience.

The argument of the store-house of chaotic treasure, of the rude and undigested mass of the Egyptian *littérateur*, is in brief this: Athenæus is represented describing to a certain Timocrates the conversation which took place at a banquet, or rather banquets, furnished by a rich Roman, named Larensius or Laurentius, to which Athenæus was himself invited together with other learned persons. Larensius, to adopt the nomenclature of Schweighäuser, is a man of a munificent soul, and one who affects the Socratic method of inquiry. He has a good library, and is equally well acquainted with the Latin and Greek languages, which

latter circumstance, by the way, seems not to have been the case with Athenæus himself, who quotes not a single Latin author throughout his whole work. For the former, he had the library of Alexandria, where he spent, perhaps, the best part of his life. The host, owing to this double linguistic excellence, is entitled a sort of Asteropæus, whom Homer represents fighting with two spears at once, one in each hand against Achilles, like the innocent fratricide Balin, who fought with two swords in the *Morte d'Arthur*. The guests at this erudite entertainment, the Deipnosophists themselves, are composed of an acute lawyer, a poet who had devoted himself in no careless manner to the whole circle of arts and sciences, yet a man who could talk on any matter proposed as though he had made that the sole object of his study, several most admirable grammarians, a sprinkling of philosophers, a whole troop of rhetoricians, a musician or two, and last, though not least, the famous physician, Galen, and a certain Cynulcus, a Cynic, who, not contented with two swift-footed dogs, like Telemachus, when he attended the *agora*, is followed by a more numerous pack than ever pestered Actæon. All these are from time to time "run down," as Athenæus expresses it, by Ulpian—according to Schweighäuser—the well-known jurist, who, from a singular and inconvenient habit of asking at bed and at board and on every occasion about the proper use of words, is nicknamed *Keitoukeitos*. It was the eccentric custom of this individual never to eat anything until he had inquired into the full value of the word by which that thing was customarily designated.

All these persons of the drama are blessed with most retentive memories, and quote pages of poetry with apparent ease, upon very many subjects under the sun, on earth, in ocean, and in air. Mnemonic feats are performed at this feast which entirely eclipse the forced efforts of the unfortunate children whose infant intelligences struggle so piteously under the pious hands of Professor Stokes. For instance, Plutarch, one of the grammarian guests, quotes from the parodist, Matron, a rare account of an Attic banquet, bound up in about two hundred Homeric hexameters, besides incidental passages from Eriphus, Chionides, Chrysippus, and Plato. Nay, the very cook quotes numbers of tragedies before he is content to explain the nature of a certain course with the sounding name of Rhoduntia, which he is bringing to the table. Only by urgent threats of the impatient revellers is he at last most unwillingly compelled to give the receipt of this dish, which he has called the Dish of Roses. It is calculated to surprise Soyer, and could hardly be recommended to the British housewife. Take the brains of birds and pigs (there is a noble indefiniteness about these directions), thoroughly cleanse of all sinews, and boil them, add the yolks of eggs, oil, pickle-juice, pepper, and wine. Mix with these roses pounded in a mortar. Set carefully in a new dish over a gentle and steady fire. Thus, adds the astute cook, you may have roses not only on your pates but in your paunches, and so feast your whole body with a beautiful banquet. While saying this, he removes the

cover, and such a steam of rich-distilled perfumes rises and steals upon the air, that one of the party is at once taken with a short paroxysm of poetry.

The double machinery of the dialogue between the author and Timocrates, and that in which the guests are interlocutors, presents a difficulty which a writer with more talent for dramatic writing than the Naucratan could hardly have overcome. The mimetic framework is too weak to support such a mass of multitudinous matter. The author's hands are powerless to manage it. The parts get out of gear and hopelessly entangled, there is a confusion between present and past, between the banquet itself and the relation of it, which fatigues the reader in search of form. As a work of art the failure is complete. At least, it appears so to us, who are deprived of the first two books, as Athenæus originally wrote them, and which might have contained a solution of what is at present a perplexing riddle. Was the banquet supposed to last one day only, or for several successive days? The weakest dramatic genius could hardly have adopted the former idea, considering the conversation extends through fifteen books, composing five large octavo volumes. No day, such as we mortals know, would have lasted long enough. It is like imagining the whole of the tales of the *Thousand and One Nights* told in a single evening. And of the latter idea there has not been found, by such keen eyes as those of Casaubon and Schweighäuser, the faintest vestige. Still, if a succession of banquets be not supposed, how sadly is unity of time offended by the collection at one season of the produce of spring and autumn, winter and summer. Unless, indeed, an escape out of the difficulty be suggested, like that of Selden, who, when the divines at Westminster, debating warmly about the distance of Jericho from Jerusalem, were about to yield, in favour of the shorter distance, to the argument that fishes were carried from one city to the other, renewed the debate by saying, "Perhaps the fishes were salted."

But allowing the succession of feasts, for which there is no authority, the work is still weakened as a whole, and confused by Athenæus's temporary oblivion of his framework, and by the reappearance from time to time of Timocrates, who starts up at the beginnings of chapters without any apparent occasion, but with the unexpected suddenness of a Jack-in-the-box. The length of the speeches, in many cases, causes us to forget who was the speaker. This, of a truth, is not a matter of any moment, since there is generally little connection of individuality between them. But such episodes as that of the Macedonian dinner of Hippolochus, before which the supper of Trimalchio sinks into trivial insignificance, make us utterly oblivious of the original banquet. Moreover, Athenæus's pages are frequently stained by repetitions at the shortest intervals. There is reason to believe that of the labour of correction he was, as Johnson said of Dryden, at no time very patient. He professedly imitated the dramatic dialogue of Plato. The curtain rises on a discourse of the

author with the excellent Timocrates, as on that of Phædo and Eche-
crates in its prototype the work of Socrates's disciple. The verbal
beginning is the same, *mutatis mutandis*, for the first half dozen lines.
Here we have a set speculative discussion on the immortality of the soul
in the mouth of the dying Socrates, and there, in the mouths of those we
wot of only an idle gossip, on the delights of the stomach; and yet the
latter has interested many a reprobate on whom the former has acted
as a soporific. There is a subtle irony in Athenæus' imitation. His
work shows the mind subsisting chiefly for the sake of the body, whereas
his predecessor showed the body subsisting solely for the sake of the
mind. It is like a problem of St. Chrysostom with a rider attached to
it by Spinoza.

With regard to those who have written of banquets before him,
Plato and Xenophon, says Athenæus, both did well in imitating Homer,
by mentioning the names of the guests and the cause of the feast, in
introducing persons of different ages and opinions, and in the perform-
ance of a preliminary libation to the gods, with the proper divine honours
and prayers. Epicurus, whose banquet is unfortunately lost, acted
otherwise. He made all his guests philosophers of the atomic school,
and showed throughout no regard or reverence for any god whatever.
But Plato's beautiful dialogue on love, second perhaps to his *Phædrus*
alone, if not superior even to that, displeases the Naucratic for its want
of Homeric decorum. Like jealousy, the green-eyed monster, Plato
appears to him to mock the meat he feeds on. He gives too many flouts
and dry blows, ill suited to the dignity of the occasion. Particular
exception is taken to that part of the work—the favourite of the Fathers
of the Christian Church—where Aristophanes is unable, when it comes
to his turn, to give his opinion about love, through a violent attack of
those sobbings of a convulsed stomach, popularly known as hiccough, and
asks Eryximachus the physician, who happens to sit next, to speak for
him, and also suggest a remedy. The latter, as the reader will remember,
replies that probably the inconvenience will subside simply by his holding
his breath for awhile; but if not, he must gargle his throat with water, and
should the attack become very tiresome, take something to tickle his nose
and sneeze. The remedial efficacy of sternutation in this malady was also
maintained by Sir Thomas Browne. Athenæus considers this episode un-
worthy of introduction into a serious work. So he objects to the mockery
of the balanced sentences of Agathon, the father of the feast, and to Alci-
biades' expression of his ardent attachment. He believes the banquet would
not be less interesting if the greater number of the guests were not wholly
or partially intoxicated. This, he concludes, triumphantly referring to
the unhappy Plato, is the man who is for expelling Homer from our
cities. But is his the way to improve mankind? No, indeed; a Mercury
cannot be made out of any wood, nor a spear from a stalk of savory. In
the works of both Plato and Xenophon he detects several anachronisms.
Though his own work is less connected than that of either, it is certainly

more interesting and more full of valuable information. Yet we, of course, fail to find in the feast of Laurentius the engaging picturesqueness of the feast of Callias, or the epideictic eloquence of that of Agathon.

Plutarch's *Symposium of the Seven Wise Men* seems to ask a word or two here, though Athenæus seldom mentions even his name. It is founded on the amusing anachronism of the contemporaneity of the seven sages. If a banquet at all, it is like those just mentioned, only a banquet in name, for there is no appearance of the merest morsel of meat. This Barmecide entertainment takes place at the house of Periander, the tyrant of Corinth. There is no life or stir about it; the whole thing is as solemn and unreal as a symposium of the dead. It is, in fact, a mere vehicle for riddles and anecdotes, frequently obscure, not always intelligible, and resembles the works of the other writers of feasts, as a school-boy's exercise an essay of Addison or Macaulay. It possesses, however, one modern Western peculiarity. It is graced by the presence of women. Melissa, queen of Corinth, and Eumetis her companion, a lady who flings her wit about like men fling dice, without premeditation, converse with the seven sages and the poet, priest, and physician who have been invited, at the commencement, but withdraw politely at the conclusion, leaving the gentlemen to their wine.

For a sample of the talk there is Chilo, who, considering it bad enough to meet any chance companion compulsorily in a ship, never came to a dinner-party without knowing who were to dine. This sage commemorates the reply of Lycurgus to one asking for a democracy—"Go you, my friend, and try the experiment first in your own house." There is Thales, explaining that he never said, as was charged upon him, "that an old king was the rarest thing in the world but an old sailor; however," he adds, "I will say with the lad who threw a stone at a dog and hit his stepmother, 'This throw of mine is not wholly lost.'" The peculiarity of the ass is alluded to—an impure animal, and no lover of music, and yet affording bones above all others adapted for melody. There is Anacharsis, who, on being asked if there were any female musicians in Scythia, replied simply, "We have no vines there," and after held his peace.

To return to Athenæus. It is difficult to say how many dry skeletons he has padded round with flesh and fat.

Eustathius's *Commentaries* had been a lean thing were it not for the prelate's subtle conversion of Athenæus's fodder into his own clerical adiposity. Not alone was Eustathius in watering his garden from this well. Ælian's various histories is only a blurred photograph of the *Deipnosophists*, and all the idea, as well as most of the matter of the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius, would change its author's name under the touch of the spear of Ithuriel. The least generally interesting, and perhaps the greater part of the work, the explanation of rare Greek words, must have been pleasant and useful to Stephanus in the compo-

sition of his Lexicon. That unwearied labourer allows that many of his philological expositions are but secondhand from him who collected probably all that was most worth collecting in the ancient grammarians that preceded him.

Modern writers have helped themselves from his platter liberally on all sides. It would not be easy to write a book upon the inner life of the ancients, without having recourse continually to his pages; many of his capital stories, also, have been borrowed and reset, looking generally, it must be confessed, much the better for their modern *rifacimento*. One of his tales is especially worth telling. After he has shown us that it is allowable to be excessively drunk only on the occasion of some religious festival, the disastrous results of intoxication are graphically described in the case mentioned by a certain Timæus of Tauromenium. One of the houses in Sicily was called the *Trireme* on this account. Some young men having well drunken therein, and being heated with their drink, reach such a pitch of madness as to imagine themselves at sea, aboard a trireme. They likewise conceive that, a tempestuous wind having arisen, they are tossed hither and thither by the waves. They hear the shipmaster give orders to lighten the ship, and anon they cast all the furniture of the house which they had hired of ill-fated landlords for the feast out of the window. Then many passing through the street are gathered together, having regard to their own gain. These make off with goblets of gold and rich raiment, but the young men still rage on. Next day come the magistrates, being appealed to by the owners of the house, but the youths, yet faint from the effects of sea-sickness, defend themselves by alleging the violence of the storm, and the necessity under which they lay of lightening the vessel if they would ever again see land; and while the magistrates listen in amazement, the eldest addresses them thus: "I indeed, O Tritons, being aghast with fear, have thrown myself under the lowest bench of the ship. But if ever we escape from these billows, and, our hope being not utterly taken away, we reach the destined harbour, we will dedicate to you, our saviours, who have appeared unto us in such happy hour, statues in our own country and in a public situation, side by side with our other gods of the sea." And so the house was called the *Trireme*.

This pretty piece of foolery furnished the most laughable scene in Cowley's Latin Play, *Navfragium Jocularè*, and is the gist of the jest related to old Wincot by young Geraldine, in Thomas Heywood's tragedy of the *English Traveller*, where the humour is much heightened after the "stools, tables, tressels, trenchers, bedsteads, cups, pots, plates, and glasses," have been thrown into the street as into the ocean, by the description of one fellow whistling like the boatswain, another struggling on the floor as if swimming for his life, another rowing with a fiddler's bow for his oar, in the belly of the bass-viol, his cock-boat, and another astride his fellow, fumbling on a gittern, and thinking to escape like Arion on the dolphin's back.

Athenæus was not entirely free from literary *malice*. For instance, the student of human nature is careful to impress on the minds of his readers, telling the matter twice over, that Æschylus was certainly drunk when he wrote his best tragedies. He adds that Sophocles used to reproach him thus—that if he did what he ought to do, at all events he did it without knowing what he was doing. Schlegel does not interpret this as a reference to the inebriety of the mighty author of the *Eumenides*. According to him, Sophocles, in his “simple words,” exhausted the whole of what men understand by the phrase, “genius working un-awares.” “*Einfache Worte, die jedoch das ganz erschöpfen, was wir unter einem bewusstlos wirkenden Genius verstehen.*” Of Aristotle, Athenæus says he would wish to know what Nereus informed him of the habits of fish. Is it, after all, so sure that the purple fish lives for six years? He marvels at a mare of seventy-five, hesitates to admit the possibility of ivy growing out of a stag’s head, and utterly declines to believe that the only fish without gall is the dolphin; in a word, he speaks with little respect of this great natural historian, and says of him generally that he wrote such things as are, in the words of the comic poet, “wonders for fools.”

Among the many works which an innumerable series of years has destroyed is a book from which Athenæus confesses he borrowed much, and very probably borrowed much more than he confesses. This is the composition of one Archestratus, usually described as a native of Gela, who travelled through many lands with the sole purpose of discovering the most dainty dishes in each, and introduced the results of his wide researches to a grateful world in an epic poem, called *Gastrology*, *Gastronomy*, or *Hedypathy*. The golden verses of this Pythagoras of Epicures were thought worthy of translation by no less a person than Ennius. Grave and wise, and second Homer as this most ancient of Latin poets was, he was still the right kind of man to undertake the work if, as Horace says of him—

Nunquam nisi potus ad arma
Prosiluit dicenda.

For Archestratus himself, he lived in a land famous for good eating, and his care for his belly was doubtless an hereditary solicitude. The *Sicula dapes* were, it is scarcely necessary to remind the reader, proverbial for their luxurious completeness. Yet his opinions on some points connected with cookery are peculiar. He regards the paunch of a pig in the light of a sweetmeat, a *dragée* fit to be taken with wine after dinner. “Attic cakes and honey,” says this tutor of Epicurus, with the gnomie sententiousness of Hesiod, “are what ennoble a banquet. Without these one may as well descend into hell, and be buried innumerable fathoms deep below the earth.” But he is so remarkably eloquent in his eulogy of the sea-dog, that it would be scarcely fair not to give a

version as exact as possible of his own inspired words in this particular. About the sea-dog, then, he writes in heroic hexameters thus :

But few of mortals know this food divine.
The light and fimsy locust-souls of men
Care not to eat him, tremble at the thought,
Because the beast, forsooth, himself devours
Men's bodies.

"Why," he continues, "all fish will do this if they get a chance, and fools who reason in this fashion had better betake themselves to the cabbages of Diodorus at once."

Another dip with our hand into the wheel of fortune, and we pull out a label marked Alexis. Here we have the hero above mentioned of over two hundred dramas, the comic poet of Thurii, the instructor of Menander. Many spars of this noble ship, long ago wrecked by Time, are saved for us by the labours of Athenæus. A single sample of his lines may show how well he deserved that untranslatable epithet of *χαλκς*, bestowed on him by his sole historian. It is from the *Asotodiscalus*, or *Master of Debauched Men*, in which comedy one Xanthias exhorts his fellow-servants to a sweet life, thus :—"Why dost thou go on chattering up and down, babbling out the silly talk of thy sages in the Academy and the Odeum, these wise men whose words are—nothing! Let us drink, ah! let us drink our fill. O Sicon, Sicon! let us be merry, and feed our life while we may. Revel, O Manes, revel! nothing is better than the belly. This is thy father, this alone thy mother. Virtues, dignities, empires, are but idle pomp, the empty whispers of a dream. Fate will chill thee at the appointed time; then only what thou hast eaten and drunk will be thine, but all the rest dust as Codrus, as Pericles, and as Cimon."

Perhaps the next most esteemed writer of Middle Comedy after Alexis was Antiphanes. He has a Spanish fertility of dramatic invention, having written, according to some calculations, a hundred more plays than Alexis. Supposing what he says of the fishmongers of his age to be the truth, we have little fault, comparatively, to find with those of ours. "Once upon a time," says Antiphanes, "I used to consider the Gorgons a pure fiction, but as soon as I came into the fish-market I found out my mistake. I looked upon the fishmongers and straightway was myself changed into stone. I had to turn my face from them before I talked to them. They froze me with the exorbitant prices they asked for the merest fragment of a fish."

Of old were many marvellous fishes; among them the fish that sings like a thrush, the *exocetus*, which takes its rest out of the water, and the fish which falls in a shower of rain. Of these were many; but an unique dolphin is mentioned by Phylarchus, a lively Greek historian, that, being saved one day, became afterwards so attached to his saviour that he attended, with other dolphins, his funeral procession, which hap-

pened many years afterwards. Almost as noble an animal was this as Pliny's Gætulian lion, who attacked the unprotected female. She, representing her forlorn and fugitive condition, implored his compassion, and observing that she was a prey unworthy of his high repute, thus effectually soothed his natural ferocity.

Between the talk on wine and that on wine-cups is a talk on riddles, or "fishing-nets," as the Greek word signifies. These may be divided roughly into the extremely easy and the extremely difficult. Of the former are questions respecting words beginning with a certain letter, a certain syllable, or a certain word, or questions respecting words without a certain letter, in which last kind the lipogrammatists would be likely to succeed. Such a test of acuteness must indeed have been a mere toy to the celebrated Tryphiodorus, Athenæus's countryman, and the author of the *Lipogrammatic Odyssey*, in which, according to Eustathius, the letter Σ was nowhere to be found. Of the extremely difficult enigma, here is a sample. The author of it is Eubulus, and it occurs in a book called, for some unexplained reason, *Sphingocaron*. "It is locust-eyed, not sharp-mouthed, double-headed, a warrior marring the birth of unborn children." Here is a weird enigma which no Davus, nor Œdipus either, is likely to expound. Samson's hard saying, which he put forth to his guests at his wedding feast, is scarcely more hard; a riddle which, as the erudite Adam Clarke justly objects, is scarcely a fair one, seeing that, unless the fact to which it referred were known to the Philistines, there was no rule of interpretation by which it could be found out. Happily, however, for the inquisitive, Eubulus answers his own enigma. "It is an ichneumon." In what point the resemblance of eyes in the two beasts is to be detected the naturalist must determine. As for not being "sharp-mouthed," the ichneumon is the very reverse. But this of course increases the subtlety of the conundrum. No variety of the genus *viverra* presenting the striking peculiarity of two heads was known to Bochart or Cuvier; but Pliny, to whom the world is so deeply indebted for his collection of interesting facts in natural history, informs us that the ichneumon in battle uses his head indifferently with his tail, and the author of the riddle himself assures the reader that he stings at one end and bites at the other. Supposing this to be true, which there is every reason to doubt, the circumstance does not seem to justify Eubulus in calling the beast double-headed. With these exceptions, the enigma, though difficult, is perfect. The allusion to the unborn refers, of course, to the crocodile's eggs, which this Pharaoh's rat is said to feast upon.

Where the Jews, as we learn from Judges, laid bets of sheets and change of galleys, the Greeks staked cups of wine. Sometimes (it is to be hoped it was not so in the instance of the ichneumon) he who was unable to declare the riddle received to drink at one draught, with his hands bound behind him, wine mingled with pickle. So ingenious is man in devising for himself additional torments to those of his destiny,

even during the time of eating and drinking, in which hours at least he dreams that he is happy!

Most of the problems presented by the Deipnosophists would not certainly be found out in seven days or in seventy times seven. The three Samian young ladies, who delighted themselves with riddles at the festival of Adonis, may well be compared, in their licence of language, with the three ladies of Bagdad, Zobeide, Amine, and Safi, who amused themselves with that exceptionally lucky porter in the bath. Two queries most nearly approaching the modern idea of a riddle are: "What is that which is biggest at birth, smallest at maturity, and again biggest at death?" and "What are the names of the two sisters which bring forth alternately one another?" The answer to the former is "a shadow," to the latter "day and night."

That inquisitive judge, who, when any witness appeared before him of more years than are usually allotted to humanity, asked him how he had arrived at such great age, would probably have been struck by the receipt of Gorgias the Leontine, who gave as his only reason for being a centenarian, the account that he had never done anything at any time to please any one but himself. But if the reader require a physical rather than a moral receipt for longevity, he has one ready in the words of Democritus, the philosopher of Abdera, who simply said, "Moisten your inside with honey, and anoint your outside with oil." This was he who, having determined at last to die, being weary of life, was entreated to defer doing so awhile by the affectionate female members of his family. Not that these cared for him any more than Martha Blount for poor Pope (who can forget her grateful feminine inquiry, "What! is not the old man dead yet?"); but they happened to be celebrating the Thesmophorian festival, and his death would have been an ill omen. So he bravely supported himself till their feast was brought to a conclusion by smelling at hot bread.

The story of Thrasylaus (or Thrasyllus, as he is called by Ælianus) reminds us of that of Gryllus, who, the reader will remember, was changed into a pig, and held the porcine so far superior to the human happiness as to refuse, with fierce indignation, an offer of re-conversion into what Milton ironically calls the form divine! Now, Thrasylaus was afflicted with such excessive madness, that he thought all the ships which came to the Piræus belonged to him. So he entered them in his books as such, and sent them away as such, and regulated their affairs in his mind, and when they returned to port he received them with rapturous joy, as a man might well do who was master of such wealth. But if any ships chanced to be lost, about these indeed he made no kind of inquiry, much less moan or lamentation, but delighting in all which arrived safe, he passed a life of entire satisfaction. Unfortunately, a brother of Thrasylaus impertinently interferes, and puts the good man in the hands of a doctor, who cures him of his illusion. "But," says Thrasylaus, "I never in my life enjoyed myself more than at that time

(the time of his madness), for sorrow I never had at all, but my multitude of pleasures was excessive."

Marius and Sobieski, who fill a distinguished position in Brillat-Savarin's catalogue of obese heroes, sink into insignificance when compared with some of those of Athenæus. Take Dionysius, the Heracleote, as a sample. The man was once a king, by leave of the contributors to the court journal. Like the fat boy in *Pickwick*, his adiposity burdened him with an overwhelming inclination to sleep. But his able physicians, after mature deliberation, devised a means to keep him awake. It was simple, as indeed all great discoveries of every kind are, but it was efficacious. These benefactors of suffering humanity ordered very long and thin needles to be prepared, and with these they stuck him in the stomach at stated intervals. Now his obesity was such that the needle travelled for some distance without producing any sensible effect; it seemed indeed to be passing through several overcoats or outer wrappers, and Dionysius himself lay unconcerned like a stone, but when the needle had made its way through the external integument of fatty tissue, and had arrived at the man himself, then indeed he awoke. He was distinguished, says his historian, above all his predecessors for gentleness and humanity of disposition. Nor did the indulgence in the good things of this life to an inordinate degree shorten his time of indulging, for he lived to a fair old age.

Of little less value than the fable told by Menenius Agrippa to the raging plebeians of Rome, was the reply of Pytho, the Byzantine orator, to his quarrelling fellow-citizens, who, however, all agreed in scoffing his exceeding fatness. Striving to bring them into harmony, said he—"Where is the laugh, O citizens? Ye see my size such as it is; know now, that I have a wife far fatter than myself. When we agree, one small bed will hold us both, but if we have a difference, not the whole house can contain us."

One of the Deipnosophists is of opinion that excessive leanness is a less evil than its opposite. But this, too, has its inconveniences. Philetas, a poet of Cos, suffered perhaps more than others from poverty, that constant disease of poets. At any rate, he became so reduced in body, that he was obliged to bind leaden balls to his feet, lest he should be blown away. Cinesias also was exceedingly tall and thin; he was wont to take a plank of linden-wood and strap it to his back, in order to avoid swaying to and fro in the air. It is evident from these and other relations of a like serious sort, that the Egyptian historiographer had acquired, in addition to his knowledge of the language of the Greeks, that perfect intrepidity of lying of theirs, to which Pliny and Juvenal so delicately allude. Evidently, having once diverged from the truth, he considered it highly illogical and against all rules of art, to hesitate about the admission of any subsidiary or adminicular falsehood.

The exactions, impudent and unreasonable, of money under the plea of superstition, which still unfortunately beset us, when not repressed

by the police, at certain seasons, such as the first of May and the fifth of November, at the coming in of oysters in early August, and for many a day after Christmas in the old and new year, had their melancholy prototypes in ancient Greece. In both cases the final result is the same, the money comes into the pockets of the beggars. But there is poetry in the ancient petition, the accessories are chaste, the accompanying songs not coarse. In the place of an idle and dirty black-guard, unseen happily, except as to his hands, dancing about in a dusty old extinguisher, supposed to represent to the cockney intelligence the fresh green and fair young leaves of early summer, the Greeks offered simply a wreath of laurel or olive, adorned with fruit and flowers, and in sign of supplication, ringed here and there with soft loops of whitest wool, and hung up, at harvest time, at the house door, while holy rites were a-doing to Helios and the Hours within. In the place of the wretched balderdash which accompanies and interprets the extension of a broken old oyster-shell begrimed with filth, and which bears reference to a so-called grotto, situated, if existent in the nature of things, in some low slum which few would ever think of penetrating without the escort of an able-bodied constable, the Rhodians of many more than two thousand years ago sang an excellent song, in the iambic verse of Hipponax, relating to a jackdaw, which they carried with them, and for whose sole use and benefit the money given to them was, by a fiction as transparent as that in a missionary audit of "providing the Ojibbeway Indians with flannel-jackets," collected. This same people had also a Chelidonisma or Swallow-song, which in the original, as presented by Athenæus, is of unusual elegance—an elegance perhaps wholly lost in the following almost literal version:—

THE SONG OF THE SWALLOW.

The swallow is come, is come, and brings
Fair hours, fair years upon her wings;

White and black,

Her belly and back,

From your rich house you will surely roll

A cake of fruit, or will give us a bowl

Of wine, or a chest of cheese, or wheat,

The swallow of plain pulse-bread will eat.

Shall we go, or receive?

If we don't, we won't leave;

We'll tear up your door,

Your lintel—nay more,

We'll take your wife, who is sitting there

In your rich house—beware! beware!

Little is she, and light to bear;

Something to us afford,

Yours shall be large reward,

We are young not old, and we beg of you

Unto the swallow your doors undo!

This threat of carrying off a man's wife might not indeed in some cases be the most effectual means of obtaining money for the Swallow. There are, who think that Job's wife was not left to him, when all his other property was taken away on his probation, without good and sufficient reason. The only piece of advice she is recorded to have given him certainly increased Satan's chances of ultimately obtaining that much-vexed inhabitant of Idumæa. Probably, too, in the Swallow song, the threat was uttered in jest; not like that of the colliers in the North of England, who lie in wait at the church door for any poor fellow who has just fixed his neck in the nuptial noose, and demand money for "Football" with such very earnest and serious words as admit of no refusal. In our own country the desecration of the mysteries of our holy faith by singing beggars is not the least objectionable part of their conduct. Most of us know the blasphemous contents of the Christmas carols. There is or used to be a song in Germany, in which three vagabonds—calling themselves Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, the three Magi or wise men of the East—tricked out in some tawdry tinsel, tell a tale of lies about their having come over mountains, led by a star to Herod's house, who happened to be looking out of window at the time. At Burgholz in Thüringen, vagabonds put a gilt paper crown on a beet-root and carry it about as John the Baptist. No sincere Christian will read of these shameless wickednesses without a shudder. They conclude by asking for sausages and drink-money, and are wont to cry out "Eu au! Eu au!" till they receive the objects of their quest.

This kind of thing would in no wise have been allowed among the Sybarites, who, says Athenæus, were the first people who forbade those who made a noise in their work from dwelling in their city, such as braziers and smiths and the like, lest the sleep of the Sybarites might be at any time disturbed. Nor was it lawful for any cock to be nourished in that community. They were indeed a luxurious folk. The famous story of the Sybarite Smindyrides and the rose-leaf is not to be found in Athenæus but in Ælian's various histories; still, the former gives us some idea of his magnificence by saying that when he went to marry Clisthenes' daughter—the desire of whom, as the reader of Herodotus will remember, caused such sad misconduct in Hippoclide—he took with him a thousand fishermen, bird-catchers, and cooks. He it was who boasted that for twenty years he had never seen the sun rise or set, and this he considered a mighty and marvellous proof of his happiness. The man, as it seems, went to bed early and rose late, being in my opinion, says Laurentius the host, a miserable man in both particulars. Many other matters may be learnt from the *Deipnosophists* concerning these Sybarites, of whom the most effeminate moderns of Paris or Naples seem altogether unworthy to unloose the sandals. They were wont to put their bathing-men and women in chains to prevent these slaves going too fast and scalding the bathers; their children wore purple garments, and had their curls braided with gold; they gave their women a year's notice

of any banquet, that they might be appropriately adorned, and delighted in Maltese puppy dogs; they flogged their slaves to the sound of the flute, and taught their horses to dance; they exempted from taxes, as an honourable public distinction, those who caught or sold eels. The instruction of the horses, however, led on a time to a disaster. The Sybarites were drawn up against the Crotonians. The latter had flute-players in military uniform. These, by chance, played airs which the horses of the Sybarites happened to know, seeing that in time to them they had been taught to dance, standing on their hind feet and with their fore feet in the air; and so the Sybarite cavalry took to dancing, and the Sybarites lost that battle.

Of individual daintiness we have more than one description. There is Pithyllus, surnamed the Nice Feeder, who not only wore habitually a skin tongue-preserver, but wrapped up that unruly little member so as to be ready for the repast, and afterwards cleaned it by rubbing it on a fish. Melanthius, too, despising the cradled immortality of Tithonus, prayed for his part to have an ostrich's neck in order to dwell as long as possible on sweet things. Of this gentleman it is recorded that, like the frog in the fable, he was for stretching his gullet beyond what nature permits to man, and died in consequence.

Nor were the cooks of the period unworthy of these heroes, if they complied with the conditions of Sospater.

Un cuisinier quand je dîne
Me semble un être divin,

says Desaugiers. The pagan cook, as he appears in some verses quoted from Sospater by Athenæus, must have been little less than an *être divin* at any time. For he should be, says that poet, a natural philosopher, to understand the varieties and habitations of every edible fish, flesh, or fowl; an architect, fitly to arrange his light and to construct his chimney, seeing that smoke in a certain direction makes some difference in the taste of a dinner; he should be also acquainted with military strategics, to serve up dishes in regular order, to know the time of advancing and retreating, to consider the situation of the guests, and to keep his servants at their proper posts; and finally he should be, instead of an insidious ally to the physician, a good physician himself: for, as some French *abbé* is reported to have said, "Between a bad cook and la Brinvilliers there exists only a difference of intention." If cooks were to possess such knowledge as this, they might well be sold at Rome for four talents—a price sufficient to buy a dozen professors of rhetoric or morality.

One of the books of his interesting *Table Talk* this miscellaneous writer has consecrated to courtesans. These are painted with admirable richness, and stand out on his canvas clear and exquisite as the Hætare of the inspired Ezechiel. Not the least among them is the lively Gnathæna, who wrote a set of *Leges Convivales* like rare old Ben, but extending to over three hundred lines instead of a couple of dozen. But

then these Academic verses comprised other rules than those of the Tavern. Not of those thrifty souls was she, souls that never spend their words and their wit at the same moment. On one occasion, when a lover had presented her with a very small quantity of wine, but, as he said, sixteen years old, "Nay," said she; "it is surely very little of its age to be as old as that!"

For the story of the ship of Hiero—a very great "story," of a peacock that fell in love with a little girl, of the gentle game at hanging (the jest was when one was too late in cutting himself down, and died kicking) played at the dinner-parties of the Thracians, of a certain marvellous production of oysters, and of the romantic fate of Odatis, daughter of Omartes, with many more stories equally entertaining and instructive, the book itself must be consulted: there is no room for them here. The only apology for those already told is, that the *Deipnosophists* of Athenæus—like Lady Bab's favourite author *Shickspur*—is not a book, whatever the Kittys of society may suppose, to be read over in an afternoon.

Ethics and Aesthetics of Modern Poetry.

In the history of every art there are continually recurring periods at which artistic progress, and sometimes almost artistic life, seems to be threatened by those obstructive theories and conventional rules to which art every now and then is authoritatively asked to submit. Just as religion, in its purest and most spiritual aspects, seems to lose ground in nearly the same proportion as dogmatic theology gains it, true art becomes weakened by the overgrowth and imposition of its authoritative and arbitrary methods.

Poetry, for example, was never more seriously hampered and handicapped than by the superstitious observance of the old dramatic unities of time and place. Although to all but a very small number that doctrine looks ridiculous enough from our modern point of view, and is not likely seriously to trouble us again, it was only one out of many difficulties of a similar nature which periodically arise to vex such questions. Fallacious theories in matters of art, as well as morals, will probably continue to come up for discussion, with average regularity, as long as art is cultivated.

The theory of the dramatic unities itself was only the logical consequence of Aristotle's narrow definition of poetry, as nothing more and nothing higher than imitation. It was but an extension and application of the iron law of literal imitation to the particulars of time and place. As the world progresses, or thinks it progresses, each cultus brings along with it its besetting snares, and even old theories, supposed to be long ago historically dead and buried, seem to come back to life with such confident rejuvenescence, and clothed so cunningly in the fashionable costume of the hour, that many of them are daily passed off, among the inexperienced, as actual novelties. Just as we have had the atomic theory and fortuitous Cosmos of Democritus and Epicurus—we say nothing of the soundness or unsoundness of the theory—rehabilitated in nineteenth-century English, as the newest thing in science; just as we have in theology the pantheism known to India for thousands of years, formulated in the mythology of Greece, and revived by Spinoza in the seventeenth century, again served up in the mystical prose-poetry of its fashionable preachers and teachers; so, in literature and art, more than half of the disputations arising out of such subjects are neither more nor less than revivals of old discussions with new names.

One of the most fashionable fallacies that have recently cropped up, and engaged the attention of artists and art critics, has been discussed

under the attractive and, to some extent, misleading title of "Art for Art's Sake," misleading in the first place, because the whole argument turns upon the definition of the word "art," and the exact ground, ethical and æsthetical, which that word legitimately covers. The extreme supporters of the art for art's sake theory seek, indeed, to draw an impassable line between the ethical and æsthetical, and declare that, however they may have been mixed up by morally disposed but stupid people, art and morals have really nothing to do with each other. The doctrine is based upon one of those half-truths which, viewed exclusively from one side, appears to be exceedingly plausible, but which, upon closer acquaintance and viewed as a whole, is altogether unsound, and as full of danger to art as to morals.

Its reference to morals we do not care to touch, but would rather leave that question to the care of those professional gladiators of the consecrated ring who, so to speak, have taken out a licence to treat that side of the subject, and with whose trade monopoly we have no desire to interfere. Its reference to art, however, and especially to poetry, is another matter, and one in which a large portion of the world, licensed and unlicensed, may fairly be supposed to take an interest. It is somewhat ominous that, in its relation to poetry, the doctrine has been already set up by some of its supporters, in extreme cases, not as an argument in the interests of art, so much as a shelter and attempted justification of artistic uncleanness. In so doing, the supporters of such a view may be said, in some sort, to have supplied an answer to their own arguments; for if it be beyond the province of art, and inconsistent with her legitimate object and aim, that she should ever become the exponent of morality, it must surely be admitted that it is equally foreign to her nature to become the exponent of immorality. These are but the two segments of the same argument, and, knocking out the key, the two must fall together. That morals and art, however, broadly speaking, are each in possession of distinct kingdoms of their own, is a general statement of the case, that no one, we dare say, will care to dispute; but that the two powers have given and taken from each other, or, in other words, that art has been largely indebted to morals, and that religion has largely availed itself of the assistance of art, is equally indisputable. The artistic instinct may be one, and the moral and religious quite another; but that third instinct, which, in the whole history of the human race, savage and civilised, has invariably joined the two in one, suggests a *tertium quid* which cannot be left out of the argument, and which proves the existence of an instinct as strong as either. That mysterious longing for the manifestation of some higher power than we possess, which underlies the history of art and religion in every phase, and at every stage and step of its development, is always looking about it for some tangible and visible incarnation. Art, indeed, may be very well defined as the result of that instinct which propels a man towards the outward embodiment and expression of the highest thought of which

his nature is capable; and no human being, savage or civilised, has ever been able to shake himself altogether clear of the desire. The barbarian who carved his first idol was impelled by this joint instinct, and it would be clearly useless to attempt to separate the art motive from the religious motive in the force that impelled him. Mean and rudimentary as his work must necessarily have been, he was moved to the performance of it by the same instinct which suggested the statue of Zeus to Pheidias, or an *Ecce Homo* to Guido or Correggio. Poor and elementary as his conception of the Deity must also have been, he was, unconsciously and according to his lights, working at the root of that tree of which Christianity itself is the crown and flower. The great work of Pheidias affords an exact illustration of the action of this joint instinct amongst a people ethnologically unique, and in a state of civilisation, as regards art, certainly unsurpassed. Strabo relates that the declared intention of the artist in that great work was to illustrate and give a visible embodiment to the mighty lines in the *Iliad*, in which Homer represents Olympus trembling at the nod of Zeus. The statue was not only considered the masterpiece of Greek art, but an actual representation of the deity, "the Father of gods and men;" and the epigram of Philip of Thessalonica, in the Greek anthology, which declares that before the production of so marvellous a work could become possible, God must have either come down to earth on purpose to show Himself to the artist, or Pheidias himself must have been taken up into heaven, seems clearly to indicate the belief that the inspiration sprung from the two combined and indivisible sources—religious and artistic. It would not be difficult to prove the existence and operation of this double instinct in the history of every nation, and in all the departments of work, aspiring to the name of art, whether in poetry, painting, sculpture, or architecture. The winged Assyrian bull, with its soulless and yet half-human face, and its cruel iron talons, the fossil remnant of a long-forgotten faith—"the dead dis-bowelled mystery," which has given Mr. Rossetti a theme for one of the most perfect poems of the century; the sphinxes of Egypt, those passionless creatures that seem to be lifted above the cares of a fleeting world, and to live in an atmosphere of everlasting repose—

Staring right on with calm eternal eyes;

Greek sculpture; Italian painting at its highest period; the architecture of the middle ages, all these are but the varied answer to the one ever-present instinct. It may be objected that many of these earlier works were the unworthy attempts of half-civilised peoples to realise their own gross conceptions of the Deity, and not to be called religious in the sense in which we use the word. But it is enough for our argument that on their moral side many of them were deifications, and that on their artistic side they were all, more or less, an answer to that unquenched and unquenchable cry in the breast of every intelligent human being, which impels him in the search to find what Mr. Tennyson calls "that

type of perfect in his mind." And even in a religious point of view, when we consider the periods which produced them, it may be after all fairly open to question, whether some of those primitive and barbarous attempts to embody and express religious feeling and religious faith were not quite as noble, quite as religious, and quite as intelligent as the stolid fetichism of a later and more pretentious cultus.

It is this longing to embody his highest aspiration in which the morality of the artist consists; and the history, poetry, or artwork of a people only becomes of importance in proportion as it is informed and penetrated by this instinct. It is its profound moral significance which gives the secret charm to Hebrew history and Hebrew poetry, bestowing upon it that unique flavour which sets it above all others in human interest. It is the strange blind groping after the perfect type, after God and the Godlike in all its art-worship, which gives that deathless and unaccountable fascination to "the glory that was Greece," and which in its highest period makes the sublimities of Æschylus read like passages from Isaiah. In such cases art is no more independent of morals than morality is of art.

With those, however, who argue for the impassable line between ethics and æsthetics, on the ground that it is not desirable that art should be a mere teacher of morality, we perfectly agree, only that does not preclude the possibility of art becoming an admirable exponent of morality without any obvious didactic intention. A man may come under moral influence without any design upon him to that end, and in fact one of the most direct means of getting him, morally speaking, to kick over the traces, is to buttonhole him over a sermon. It is not safe even to commend him for his moral excellence. "Dub not my likings virtues," says George Eliot—

lest they get

A drug-like taste, and breed a nausea;
Honey's not sweet commended as cathartic.

It dashes the native power and natural lustre of a good deed to have the light of the moral lantern turned too fully upon it. It should rather be kept dry, and in the dark, like grain seed, in order to preserve its power of germination in perfect efficiency. An obvious exhibition of morality is apt to defeat its own end. In Richardson's *Pamela*, for example (that in many respects admirable work of art), it is difficult to say whether the occasional indecency of the book, or the obtrusive morality with which it is interlarded, is the more mischievous or reprehensible element of the two. It is doubtful enough whether any modest young woman could write to her friend a glowing description of how she was *not* seduced by the squire, but in the moral tag to such a story, the step for most of us has been taken between the doubtful and the disgusting. Again, in Hogarth's pictures of the same era, in such a series, for example, as the "Harlot's Progress," no possible parade of moral purpose can ever hide the gross realism and the glut of uncleanness which

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characterise them as a whole. Preaching of such a kind was much better calculated to gratify a prurient curiosity than send any pitiful Magdalene back to the shelter of God. Saviour-less sin is an ugly thing at best, and there is neither reason nor morality in the exhibition of it. Putting the question of art aside, its moral method is unsound, and, except among the more extreme supporters of the Calvinistic heresy, happily all but obsolete. Such teaching—if there was any religion in it at all—was too exclusively based upon the purblind devil-worship of those with whom the good old orthodox damnation seemed the only safe road—moralists who mainly regarded religion as a deterrent, and upon whom "the pity of it, Iago," would have been uselessly thrown away. The simple word of the Master on the same subject, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more," reduces morality like this to ashes.

It has always been a somewhat dangerous expedient to use art for a directly moral purpose, or indeed to use it as an exponent of anything but itself. Even in the two arts which lie most closely akin—music and poetry—it is not to be attempted except at some slight sacrifice, and violence done to one or the other. The marriage of music to immortal verse was after all the dream of a poet—the ideal union of that "orb of song, the divine Milton"—a marriage made in heaven, rather than any alliance capable of being successfully consummated and ratified on earth. There are words in our poetical anthology which refuse to set themselves to music (except indeed to the native rhythm which belongs to all beautiful speech) by reason of their very loftiness and grandeur—passages so profound and impressive that, like the names of God, are hardly to be uttered in other attitude than that of worship, and not to be felt in their fulness except by ourselves alone. In the latter half of the sixteenth century—that great spring-tide of English poetry—"Marlowe's mighty line" only became possible through the poet's determination to discard what he called—

The jiggling reins of rhyming mother wits,
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay—

all the beggarly elements, that is to say, of the elder drama, the vulgar accessories, and jingling couplets with which his predecessors had so long tickled the ears of the groundlings. The deliberate adoption also of the new method by Shakespeare (who evidently profited by Marlowe's example) proved beyond a doubt, that even the modified music of rhyme could be safely dispensed with, and was no longer necessary to the very loftiest poetical expression. Music, on the other hand, has also her sacred groves, and her rapturous moments into which words may not and cannot enter; those sublime soliloquies, for example, of Beethoven, that master-magician, upon whose great sound-wave words perish and melt like snow that falls upon the sea. The soul of the hearer, under such a mighty spell as his, mounts into a region where the methods of language are superseded. He confers not with flesh and blood. A messenger has reached him with authentic tidings of invisible things, before whom the

world and its wordy doctrine stands dumb. With him who saw the heavens open and the angels ascending and descending, things of sense and time are consumed and swallowed up in the eternal chasm, as through the open gates he hears the far-off echo of a song which sings to him—

of what the world will be
When the years have died away.

No, the marriage between music and words is not consummated, and, the genius of Wagner notwithstanding, never will be consummated on earth. There is a kind of music to which words would only be a drag and an intrusion, while on the other hand there are words so sweet, so profound, and so full of a strange fascination for us, that their best possible accompaniment, and their most powerful exponents, will be found in solitude and silence. Herr Wagner may give us a new creature, the joint issue of music and the drama, but neither his theory nor his practice—wonderful as the latter unquestionably is—will ever advance music to a greater height, or poetry to a greater height, than each of these can achieve by itself alone.

If there be a danger then in asking the kindred arts of music and poetry to become the exponents of each other, the danger is greatly magnified when we come to ask the divine spirit of Poesy—

The singing maid with pictures in her eyes—

to become the exponent of the proprieties, and a sort of moral maid of all work. It would be an unpardonable stupidity to insist that she should attune her heavenly voice to the screech of Minerva's owl, and to bind the ægis about her tender flesh and put her in a pulpit would be to strike her dumb. And yet without agreeing with Dryden and the elder authorities, that "the chief design of poetry is to instruct," it is not to be denied that the best art *does* instruct, and that in the highest sense of the word. It is only when the didactic design is put in the front, and obtruded on us, that it becomes obnoxious, and indeed intolerable. To a certain extent this holds good, as we have said, even in moral teaching itself. Men must be taught as if you taught them not, whether the medium of instruction be a picture, a poem, or a sermon. The artist in either case who imagines that, being an artist, he can disregard the opinions of the rest of the world as to the morality or immorality in the choice of his subject, or thinks that he can succeed by addressing men as if they occupied a distinct moral platform from that upon which he himself stands, is grievously deceiving himself. Any such assumption, on the part of either artist or moralist, is based upon a professional fallacy; and indeed, in the case of the preacher, this tacit assumption is the real reason why the average sermon in every educated community becomes daily more ridiculous and intolerable, and more and more provocative of that refractory frame of mind which reaches a climax in Goethe's ejaculation, "five minutes more of this, and I confess everything." The question for both moralist and artist is not how to separate themselves

from their fellow-men, but how to lose sight of any such distinction, how to combine and transfuse themselves into the great soul and common mind of the world. It will not do for the artist to address men as his inferiors, but as equals. Even if they should be his inferiors, and deny his art, and laugh him to scorn, it will not serve him, like Byron in his day, to lose his temper at a public which refuses to appreciate his work. Far better is it to work on in silence, in the well-grounded assurance that the secret sanhedrim, which always judges righteously in the end, and which is always alive somewhere in the world, will one day do him justice. Rather than be tempted by such hostility to seek a separation from the world, he should descend lower yet to meet them, compelling his soul into the highways and byeways, and walking if need be with the publican and sinner, if by any means he can get his feet upon the common rock, and lay his hand at least on the common heart of humanity. By this means only can the artist draw all men to him, and by the light of his tardily acknowledged fitness compel the world at last to read the central purpose of his life, and to judge his work as a whole. In art as well as morals, the basis of all true power is in humility and self-oblivion, and nothing more completely defeats artistic effect than professional self-assertion. There is a stern independence in all healthy human nature which will not suffer itself to be patted on the back, instructed as a younger, or humoured as an invalid. Where a sense of equality or fellow-feeling is lost, artistic and moral effect goes along with it. All idea of difference between artist and audience must be cancelled, all thought of superior personality put out of the way, before art can have its perfect elemental freedom. No human breath must stain the glass, through which art at its best can be apprehended. The medium through which we perceive and appreciate what is beautiful in art should be as nearly as possible the medium through which we apprehend the beautiful in nature. It should be atmospheric and invisible. The moment at which the attention is diverted from the thought to the utterer of the thought, from the thought to the vehicle of the thought, a false step has been taken. The presence of an obvious apparatus is fatal to artistic effect. In literature, for example, as soon as the writer reveals the trick of his school, or in any way shows the self-consciousness of the literary craftsman, his style is ruined. At that point a poison enters his pen, which affects injuriously everything he utters. Whatever is attempted, the true secret of the highest method of art expression is the result of professional self-forgetfulness. It is the perfect self-negation, the almost ghostly withdrawal of Shakspeare's personality, which loads his words with that oracular significance the word of no other man possesses. It is, again, the exquisite simplicity of Homer, in which the literary performer is altogether lost sight of, set aside, sunk, and superseded in the thing performed, the unconscious "garrulous God-innocence,"—as Mrs. Browning called it—of the simple story-teller, which gives him his ever fresh

fascination. This secret power of self-surrender and self-disappearance is even strangely characteristic of the highest spiritual fact within man's cognizance. Although there has never been wanting an intense and even a morbid curiosity on the subject, what a complete withdrawal of everything like earthly personal basis, what an infinite height and depth of distance, what an impenetrable veil stands between us and the human Personality that laid in the earth the living seeds of that miracle of miracles—Christianity.

Most readers must have noticed the peculiar charm bestowed on all that Shakspeare has ever written, by the conspicuous absence of any apparent didactic purpose. In his profoundest moments he never buttonholes you. He never attempts to point the moral or improve the occasion, except where the dramatic fitness of the situation, or the character of the speaker, demands it; in such cases, for example, as Jacques and Polonius, who, of course, would be entirely out of keeping with their character if they did not preach and moralise. It was the want of this deliberate moral finger-post in Shakspeare's work which made him the stumbling-block he was to the critics of the eighteenth century. Dr. Johnson was disgusted with his reckless indifference to the poetical and moral proprieties, in making the innocent Cordelia die on the breast of Lear, and quite approved of Nahum Tate's "revival with alterations," in which that wretched creature—who wrote a poem on syphilis and rhymed the Psalms of David with the help of Dr. Brady—kept Cordelia alive, married her to Edgar, and so settled the point of poetical justice and outraged morality. Poor Nahum, from a cursory perusal of the Psalms he rhymed, had probably convinced himself that it was highly improper that the wicked should be allowed to spread himself like a green bay-tree, while the righteous went to the wall, and thought that he might as well readjust the little matter the gods had somehow overlooked, and so proceeded to do so to the satisfaction of the moralists of his time. A little further insight into the philosophy of the two great poets he, for the time being, was born to mutilate, might have taught him the working of that higher law, under which to represent virtue as a policy, and offer it any other inducement or reward than that which it offers itself, is to turn the truth of God into a lie.

Shakspeare's morality was of a kind which Johnson and his school could hardly understand, because it belonged to an order, not more honest perhaps, but infinitely higher and wider than their own. If Shakspeare's story and his art-method do not of themselves impress their moral, there are no instructions left. Through death and disaster the sun shines and birds sing, and his eyes are motionless and silent as the eyes in a mask of marble. With a moral design as clear as air, he never tells you what that design is. Like his own Æneas, in *Troilus and Cressida*—

the secrets of nature
Have not more gift of taciturnity.

He that hath ears to hear let him hear, as for the others, he does not care even to speak to them. Just as we see in nature and life itself, he uses facts sometimes in a way which seems to contradict the accepted moralities. His noblest creature starts back from the very thought of dissolution with an undisguised shudder, while his most godless worldling goes to his death in a pleasant dream, in which he "babbles o' green fields." That he looked upon the art of the mere preacher with a wise contempt is capable of abundant proof. In Jaques he makes the preacher's gift the cynical conceit of a played-out *roué*; while in Polonius he gathers up the preacher's wisdom in words that have never been surpassed, in order to fit them to the mouth of a meddling and contemptible busybody. Notwithstanding this well-marked peculiarity in Shakspeare, there are no writings which more deeply impress the reader with a profound moral intention. It would savour of special pleading to attempt to prove such a fact by mere reference to isolated passages, although there are enough of these to found such a school of moral philosophy as one would look for in vain from the work of any other man. The stronger proof lies in the broad moral tendency of his work as a whole, and the moral build of his matchless men and women, for whom he asks, not our admiration alone, but our respect. He knew, none better, that life was a mingled yarn, good and ill together, and that "cakes and ale" in some shape or other had their roots in human nature. By reason of his measureless receptivity he took the good and evil up under that massive frontal arch of his, and held them there without disturbance or displacement until the hour came for using the material in his art, when, without any conscious theory about either art or morals, he instinctively used the darker tints of humanity in such a way as brought its higher and fairer aspects into full relief. In *King Lear*, for example, Goneril and Regan form but the dark background upon which the artist limns the white soul of Cordelia. In *Othello*, again, he paints the unsullied fame and the too trusting simplicity of the open-hearted soldier on the still blacker canvas of Iago's villany. Everywhere the good and bad are used as contrasts, and in a sense exponents of each other—Lady Macbeth over against the blameless Duncan, the thoughts of whose innocent blood at length unseat her reason; Henry V., Shakspeare's ideal man of the world, is contrasted with Sir John and his good-for-nothing tatterdemalion crew; while in his most spiritual sphere we have Prospero and Miranda set against the hardly human group of Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo. In all these we have the good and ill, the noble and ignoble, together, but we are never left one moment in doubt as to which side engages the artist's moral sympathies; while there are single characters in which the moral qualities more distinctly predominate, such as Prospero, Cordelia, Hermione, or the Fool in *King Lear*, so utterly spotless, and even holy, both in conception and execution, that they might have been drawn, as was said of some of Fra Angelico's pictures of saints and angels, when the artist was

on his knees. There is clearly one law controlling all that is truly beautiful either in the physical, moral, or artistic world. If beauty do not naturally belong to the artistic work, if it is not interfused and made one with it in the original casting, it cannot afterwards be superadded. If Aphrodite herself have not the beauty of the living flower, the bloom cannot be laid on. Any such attempt in the case of physical beauty is a hindrance rather than a help, and in the region of æsthetics, whether moral or poetical, an artistic blunder.

M. Taine, who seems, by the way, to be as blind to Shakspeare's moral method as Dr. Johnson was (only with infinitely less excuse), has insisted upon a theory, which, if accepted by the poet, enables him to shift the entire moral responsibility of any perilous stuff he may have written, clean off his own conscience on to that of his age, and the social circumstances by which he is surrounded; although, curiously enough, the critic forgets to apply his favourite test to Shakspeare's own case, and exhausts his ingenuity to prove our great dramatist's immorality, ignoring the fact that Shakspeare was not only cleanly above his age, but that in one of his undoubtedly autobiographical sonnets he bitterly complains of the ill-fortune that threw him on a public whose manners were far below his moral standard, and in which he pitifully asks forgiveness for any shortcomings arising out of associations with which his public life necessarily brought him into contact. Surely such a confession as this might have helped the critic to discriminate between the licence characteristic of an era and that personal and premeditated uncleanness which so frequently disfigures Dryden and the Restoration group. Moreover, M. Taine's theory of environment affects only one side of the truth, and is therefore valueless as a test. To speak of an age as a separate entity controlling the units who constitute that entity, is to a certain extent a fallacy. It is just such a theory as the criticism of Olivia's Clown in the *Twelfth Night* would dispose of as "the chevreuil glove to a good wit; how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!" For, if there be any truth in the theory at all, the inverse proposition is quite as true—viz. that the leading minds of any age give tone to, and in a sense control, the social aggregate of which they themselves are the most influential units. To insist on either proposition as representing the whole truth would be to dogmatise on a half truth. What we call the spirit of the age is not to be caught in a trap which can be turned so easily inside out, nor can it be so readily formulated or manufactured into a critical tape-line by which every case may be exactly measured, least of all the case of genius. It might indeed be said with far more show of truth, that the law of environment controls all mental phenomena below the standard of genius, but at that point ceases to have any influence, and in the case of great genius even provokes a contrary current. Ordinary mental power is fenced round by that chain of outward circumstance which genius breaks; there are set bounds for the rule, but none for the exception. The theory altogether is one of those

complete little pocket oracles, which it has been too much the fashion of late to apply indiscriminately to literary and art questions, and which are held to settle everything out of hand. The doctrine, like a good many short-cuts to hard-and-fast conviction, has not that final importance which in some quarters has been rashly credited it. The dogma in art or religion (and in many other places where its presence is less suspected) which proposes to supersede the necessity for any further hard thinking, naturally recommends itself to the majority. Anything that invites a man to fold his brains up and put them away in a napkin is eagerly closed with in these days of mental strain and pressure. But fortunately, or unfortunately, things are not necessarily true because they save trouble and provide an armchair for intellectual inaction. M. Taine has supplied one of these patent processes eagerly accepted by the crowd, and which has been applied in a manner and with a completeness its original propounder did not perhaps think of. In a time like ours, when, for the education of men, all periods, and the literatures of all ages, are equally laid under contribution, the theory of environment ceases to have any tangible meaning, and genius in such circumstances is moulded by its own predilections. Such a theory may have a limited application in a literary clique, but in the great broad world its effect becomes quickly invisible. It falls into the vast ocean of modern life and merely makes

a circle in the water,
Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself
Till by broad spreading it disperse to nought.

If there were any really controlling principle in it, one would expect to find a striking resemblance between the poets of the same period, and this is never observable except in poetry of the poorest and most conventional description. Between the poets of our own nineteenth century, discarding the mere imitators, we find no such family likeness; on the contrary, we are rather astonished at the extraordinary variety of character and quality of gift we so often see in the same family. There is nothing in common between the scowling cynicism of Byron and the placid serenity of Wordsworth; nothing between the matter-of-fact realism of Crabbe and the idealistic tenuity of Coleridge; nothing between the open-hearted manliness of Scott and the sugar-water imitation sentiment of Tom Moore; nothing in common between the somewhat solid pudding of Southey's muse and the phantasmal spirituality of Shelley. Such contrary currents as these in the same period are surely enough to stagger the most devout believer in the iron law of environment. This diversity of gift and moral purpose is by no means confined to the poets of the present age. The greatest single figure in authenticated English history, as scholar, statesman, and poet, a greater *personage* than Shakespeare, and beyond question our greatest poet next to him, presents us with the most remarkable example. Milton is almost the lonely figure in an age whose morality is happily unparalleled

in the history of his country. What sympathy, moral or artistic, what likeness either in the conception or execution of his work, was there between him and the dissolute rhymesters and dramatists of his time? Looking back upon his life and its moral environment, we seem to see a colossal statue of Apollo, his eyes lifted up to the empyrean as he watches the arrow-flight of his immortal song; while round about his feet, all but unconscious of the godlike presence, hand in hand with their painted and patched bacchantes, dance the wine-stained satyrs of that never-to-be forgotten court.

Turning aside, however, from the moral action and counteraction of an age and its greatest artists, it is somewhat extraordinary to find that it has been left to the nineteenth century to propound the dogma that art to be worthy of the name must be cut off from all moral significance, and that the artist, especially the poet, before he begins his work, must carefully lay aside his moral consciousness, as if that were some kind of detached movement of his being he could take up or lay down at will. The doctrine was tolerable as long as it went no further than that youthful enthusiasm of beauty for beauty's sake, which young Hallam, for example, at the age of twenty, insisted upon when reviewing Mr. Tennyson's first volume in 1831. But when it is argued to the exclusion and expulsion of all moral sense, it is a very different thing; and that Mr. Tennyson gives his countenance to any such doctrine is sufficiently disproved by all his highest and best work. In such poems as the *Palace of Art*, *The Two Voices*, *The Vision of Sin*, and *In Memoriam*, in which a profound moral sense bulks most largely, his imagination finds its greatest scope, and in the particular sphere to which these poems belong, the artist reaches a higher point than has ever yet been chronicled in the same direction in the entire history of English poetry. *The Palace of Art*, indeed, is a poetical and philosophical treatise bearing upon the very subject under discussion; and in which the question is plainly put and plainly answered—whether or not it be possible that a human soul can lay aside its ethical instinct, and live happily and exclusively for the gratification of its æsthetic sense, whether or not a man can successfully detach and lay aside his moral nature, and find the aims and objects of existence served and satisfied in the worship of beauty for beauty's sake? It is no new question, and many a soul besides the one in Mr. Tennyson's poem has undergone a similar test, and returned from the battle with a hard-won experience and in a more or less vanquished condition. Nor is it new as a theme for poetical treatment. It is the central idea in Goethe's *Faust*, in which the trampled moral nature of the hero has its revenge upon him, and reasserts itself so completely that the devil at last is duped of his dupe, and has to take his departure without him. The theme, indeed, is common to many great works representing that struggle with self and sin through which in some shape or other every soul must pass. The work, however, in which we find the most striking prototype of Mr. Tennyson's poem is the Book of

Ecclesiastes. The "Preacher" in that moral monologue, and the "Soul" in the laureate's poem—both of them dramatic personations—proceed on the same lines. "I made me great works," says the hero of the Hebrew drama, "I builded me houses; I made gardens and orchards; I gathered me silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings:" while the "Soul" in the *Palace of Art*, in varied phrase to the same effect, begins—

I built my soul a lordly pleasure house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.

The Hebrew philosopher says to his heart, "Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure;" while the modern poet, in what sounds almost like a paraphrase of the same words, says—

O Soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear Soul, for all is well;

and so the two set out upon that quest which has ever had but one end—vanity and vexation of spirit.

It is interesting to note the points of difference, as well as resemblance, in the dramatic treatment of the same idea, by writers so widely asunder in point of time as well as environment. Each story represents its hero at the commencement as one who has already attained great worldly eminence. Both are men of position and power, of unbounded means, and great culture; men who, even exposed to the danger of such an experiment, may be stained, but not retained by evil as a habit, caught but not held by the senses, as the sequel in each case proves. The eye takes in at a glance the structural beauty of the modern poem, its clear definition, and its gorgeous imagery, while the ear is held by the fascination of its deep resounding harmony; and though the subject is of necessity profound and mysterious, as all spiritual conflicts must be, there is no tinge of that obscurity, and repetition, which has made the work of the Hebrew author such a puzzle to the annotators. But the wider difference between the two will be found to lie in the moral standard accepted by the respective authors. The hero of Ecclesiastes seems to undergo a series of indulgences, with moral pauses between, in which the ever-recurring burden of *Vanitas vanitatum* is introduced, not as a *miserere*, as we are accustomed to find it under similar conditions in the Psalms, but rather with a kind of moral flourish of trumpets. This alternation of good and evil, preacher and sinner, by turns, no doubt suggested the attempt on the part of some of its early commentators to divide the poem into strophe and antistrophe, but it certainly lowers its moral tone. The hero retires from each successive trial a wiser rather than a better man, and comes back to the burden of his song, not so much with contrition as vexation of spirit, discontent rather than sorrow. The discovery of failure and the conviction of sin do not much disturb the placid scepticism of the Hebrew, and instead of repentance, or even regret, we have only dejection, disappointment, and satiety, with now and then a half-pitiful, half-sardonic grin at the utter insignificance of man's life.

Even when he reaches the sad conviction that the same event happens alike to fool and wise, and that death is the hopeless and final end of all, in which a man has no pre-eminence over a brute, he goes on making his admirable proverbs as if nothing had happened. One cannot help suspecting that he knew all through that the experiment he was making was an ungodly one, and that he was attempting to juggle his conscience into the belief that wisdom gained by a knowledge of evil was a permitted path for princes. Such experiences were probably looked upon by him in the light of contributions to what Goethe called the "pyramid of his existence." One is hardly surprised to learn that the question of the canonicity of the book has afforded such endless matter for discussion, or that by tradition it was placed amongst those works that were not to be read by anyone under thirty.

As late as the Christian era, heretics, so-called, have attempted to reject it on account of its dangerous teaching. Its many and peculiar excellences, however, are beyond question. It is one of those books which will continue to stand upon the broader canonicity of its own merits. Its keen insight into the ways and working of the world of man, and the incisive language in which its verdicts are embodied—although its direct relation to Christianity may be difficult to see—will always make it a favourite with men of the world.

Turning to the modern poem, what difference do we find there on the discovery of failure and sin! The moment the truth flashed in upon the Soul in the *Palace of Art* that her life had been an acted life—

she fell,

Like Herod when the shout was in his ears

Struck through with pangs of Hell!

No time with her for moral reflection on the vanities or insignificances of life; the new significance of it has struck her dumb; and when at last speech comes, there is no breath left for a proverb—she cried aloud—

I am on fire within:

What is it that will take away my sin

And save me lest I die?

To compare language like this to the proverbial philosophy of the moral experimenter of Ecclesiastes, would be to compare the moral method of the jailor of Philippi with that of the Duc de la Rochefoucault.

Mr. Tennyson, then, utters no uncertain sound upon the subject of beauty for beauty's sake, when that theory involves the exclusion from art of all action or correspondence with the moral instinct, and sets its worshipper on some fancied intellectual height which cuts him off from the moral sympathy of his fellow-men. His verdict is contained in a short prologue to the poem, which, like many prefaces, was perhaps an epilogue in the order of the poet's mind, and from which we quote four lines, containing, for us, the essence of the argument, and what the author

of Ecclesiastes would call the conclusion of the whole matter. The verdict is this—

That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge are three sisters,
That dote upon each other, friends to man,
Living together under the same roof,
And never can be sundered without tears.

Where the non-moral argument in poetical art is stretched, as it has been, so as to cover the immoral and justify positive uncleanness, we do not follow it. A modern singer of no small power, and possessing a lyrical gift perhaps unsurpassed amongst living poets, has lent his eloquent advocacy to this extreme view, and has solemnly assured us that the "Lesbian music, which spends itself on the record of fleshly fever and amorous malady, has a value beyond price and beyond thought." But the Nemesis that overtakes uncleanness in literature is inexorable. Nothing more quickly reduces the power of the artist, or takes him out of that atmosphere of repose in which alone the highest work is possible. Life gets soured in the repeated and hopeless defence of the indefensible. Thought becomes thin and querulous. The finer balance is lost, and power is frittered away on distracting and profitless animosities, until at last the victim becomes incapable of artistic work that does not carry upon it the plain marks either of dotage or delirium.

Man's highest and purest culture reaches him through the gates of his imagination, and it is of consequence that only those things which are lovely and of good report should enter in. The art which does not elevate, ennoble, and refine the thing it touches, but tends rather to degrade it, has no right of entrance there; and when it forces a way in the disguise of poetry, it is at best a traitor to the household. There is little chance, however, that the Lesbian school of poetry, which makes it a boast that it does not write for mothers or children, will ever gain a solid footing on English ground. Most men are disinclined at the outset to accept a poetical theory based upon productions that must be read by stealth. The reverence for mothers and children, too, has still a pretty firm hold of the earth, and does not seem likely to be uprooted and replaced by anything else just yet. An instinct rooted in human nature, and hallowed by its most sacred associations, and which—if their highest works may be called in as evidence—the greatest artists of the greatest art age delighted to honour, is not likely to be seriously affected by the Lesbian school of poetry or any other; and in all probability mothers and little children will still continue to form no inconsiderable part of that "poetry of earth which never dies." There is happily, too, a strong prejudice abroad, both amongst fathers and mothers, that when all is said and done, the poetical laurel does somehow look

greener on the brows
Of him that utters nothing base.

J. B. S.

Count Waldemar.

I.

It was in Homburg that I first met him. I had finished the noonday breakfast which I always take at the Cursaal, and was sitting on the terrace in front of that establishment, smoking the one morning cigar allowed me by my doctor, and contemplating with indolent satisfaction the sunny gardens before me and all the soft lights and shades that lay upon the distant woods, when he came clattering down the steps of the restaurant in his tight blue hussar uniform, his Hessian boots, and flat forage-cap, and pulling up suddenly within a few paces of my chair, began to slap his breast and rummage in his scanty coat-tail pockets in search of something which was evidently not to be found there. He was a tall, handsome young fellow, with clear blue eyes and a fair moustache, a young fellow of a type by no means uncommon in the German army; but something—I don't know whether it was his size, or his good looks, or a prophetic instinct—attracted my attention to him at once. A slight cloud overspread his features as he realised the futility of his search, and for a moment or two he seemed uncertain what to do next; but presently, becoming aware of the scrutiny of an elderly Englishman of benevolent aspect, he cheered up, as with a sudden inspiration, and approaching me in a couple of strides, raised his right hand to the side of his cap, bowed very low from the waist, and gratified me with one of the brightest smiles I had ever seen upon a human countenance.

"I have done a most stupid thing," said he, speaking with a strong German accent, but without hesitation or a shadow of embarrassment; "I have left my *cigarren-etui* at the hotel. Dare I give myself the liberty to ask if you have a cigar to spare in your pocket?"

Of course I handed him my case without further ado. I suppose that no man living could be churl enough to refuse such a request; but I was amused by it nevertheless; for it was one that an Englishman would have died rather than address to a total stranger; and indeed the article required was to be purchased close at hand in the Cursaal restaurant, where my esteemed friend M. Chevet keeps some of the choicest brands.

The young officer, however, had his reasons for not choosing to avail himself of this convenient proximity, and disclosed them with engaging candour, after taking a light from me.

"Now this is a very good cigar," he was kind enough to remark,

seating himself astride upon an iron chair. "If I would buy such a one by Chevet, I would have to pay a mark for him. One mark—yes, that is what they have asked me last night—it is unheard of! For you Englishmen, who pay without bargaining, that is very well; but we Germans" (*Chairmans* he pronounced it) "are not such fool—I mean, we know better what is the fair price."

His ease of manner was simply inimitable; I have never seen anything like it before or since. It arose, I imagine, from that unsuspecting goodwill towards the world at large which makes children who are not afflicted with shyness such charming companions. I was delighted with him. He chatted away so pleasantly and amusingly for a quarter of an hour that I was quite sorry when a formidable posse of comrades in arms—dragoons, uhlands, hussars, and I know not what other specimens of the Imperial German cavalry—came clanking along the terrace, and carried him off with them. Before this he had given me his card, which bore the name of Count Waldemar von Ravensburg; had informed me that he held a lieutenant's commission in a Würtemberg hussar regiment, and was in Homburg for the purpose of riding in some proposed military steeplechases; and had strongly advised me to dine that evening at the Hessischer Hof, where he said I should get good German fare, greatly superior to the spurious French cooking of the more fashionable hotels.

"I shall be dining there myself mit all my friends," he added, by way of final inducement.

Under ordinary circumstances such a consideration as this would have sufficed of itself to drive me elsewhere in search of my evening sustenance; for sincerely as I appreciate the many amiable social qualities of German officers, I know what these gentlemen are when a number of them get together, and I am fond neither of being deafened nor of having to bellow like a skipper in a gale of wind in order to make my own remarks audible. But I had taken such a fancy to Count Waldemar, he struck me as so genial and original a type of fellow-creature, that I was loth to lose any opportunity of prosecuting my acquaintance with him; and accordingly the dinner-hour (half-past five) found me at the door of the little Hessischer Hof.

A most cacophonous din burst upon my ears, as I entered, from an assemblage of spurred and uniformed warriors, who, as the manner of their nation is, were exchanging civilities in accents suggestive of furious indignation. My young hussar detached himself from the group, greeted me with the warmth of an old friend, and presented me to each of his comrades in turn:

"Meestr Cleefford—Herr von Blechow, Herr von Rochow, Herr von Katzow, Herr von Wallwitz, Herr von Zedlitz, Herr von Zezschwitz," &c. &c. Perhaps these were not their names; indeed, now I come to think of it, I believe they ran into considerably more syllables; but it does not much matter. They were all very polite, and indeed were as pleasant and jovial a set of youths as one could wish to meet. During

dinner the conversation turned chiefly upon races and steeplechases, giving opportunity for many thrilling anecdotes, and with our dessert we had some sweet champagne, over which we grew very merry and noisy.

When it was all over, Count Waldemar hooked his arm within mine, and in this familiar fashion we strolled out into the street, where (for it was early in August) broad daylight still reigned, and slant sunrays from the west streamed upon the long row of yellow droschkes with their patient, net-covered horses, upon the shiny hats of the drivers, upon the trim orange-trees in their green tubs, and upon the distinguished visitors—English almost exclusively—who, by twos and threes, were slowly wending their way towards the terrace, where the band would soon strike up. Gusts of cool, fresh air were sweeping down from the blue Taunus range, setting the little flags upon the Cursaal fluttering, and banging a shutter here and there. Imagine to yourself a stalwart young hussar, moving with that modicum of swagger from which no cavalry man that ever lived is quite free, and which very tight clothes render to some extent compulsory upon their wearer; imagine, arm-in-arm with him, an Englishman of something under middle height and something over middle age, clad in a grey frock-coat and trousers and tall white hat, and you will have before your mind's eye a picture which, I grieve to think, is not wholly wanting in elements of the ridiculous.

I have reason to believe that the droschke-drivers saw it in this light; I fear that my compatriots did; I know that I did myself. But I am perfectly sure that the excellent Count Waldemar was not only free from the faintest suspicion that our appearance could provoke a smile, but that he never could have been brought to understand in the least why it should do so. No one could laugh louder or longer than he, upon occasion; but then he must have something to laugh at; and it would have been impossible to convince him that there could be any joke in the simple fact of two gentlemen walking together arm-in-arm. He was in all things the most completely unselfconscious mortal I have ever known.

For my own part, I am not ashamed to confess—or rather I am ashamed, but do confess—that the notion of being promenaded up and down the terrace, under the eyes of all my friends and acquaintances, by this long-legged and rather loud-voiced young officer alarmed me so much that I was fain to insist upon leading him down one of the more secluded alleys. He did not want to walk that way; he said we should neither hear the music nor see the people there; but I pointed out to him that it would be impossible for me to give my whole attention to his conversation in a crowd; and so, being a most good-natured soul, he yielded, and went on chatting about Stuttgart, and his regiment, and his brother officers, and his horses, in all of which subjects he seemed to think that I must be greatly interested. And so indeed I was—or, at least, in his treatment of them.

Just as we reached the point where the Untere Promenade crosses the

Cursaal gardens we were met by a party of English people—an old lady, three young ones, and a couple of men carrying shawls—who came up the steps talking and laughing, and passed on towards the band. I should not have noticed them particularly had not a sudden convulsive jerk of my captive arm made me aware that my companion had some reason for feeling moved by their vicinity. The manner in which he paused, and, gazing after them, profoundly sighed, would have sufficiently revealed the nature of that reason, even if he had intended to conceal it—which of course he did not.

"Now I shall tell you something," said he, with an air of confidential candour all his own. "The lady you see there—the tall one who is walking alone—it is she whom I mean to make my wife."

"Indeed?" I answered. "I am sorry, then, that I did not look at her more closely. May I venture to ask her name?"

"Ah, diess I cannot just tell you. But it begins mit an S—that I know; for I have seen the monogram upon her fan."

"Your love affair is not very far advanced then?"

"Advanced? no; it is not yet commenced; but that is no matter. I have three whole days more to spend here, and in three days one may do much. Oh, and we do not see one another now for the first time. Last summer we have met in a bath."

"In a bath?" I echoed, rather startled.

"You do not say bath—no? Well, in a watering-place. It is true that I have not been able to make myself acquaint mit her; but my eyes have spoken. I think she has perhaps understood. And now I was thinking at dinner that *you* might present me."

"To the lady? My dear sir, I should like nothing better; but unfortunately I never saw her before in my life."

"*Versteht sich!* that is no difficulty. You are English—she is English; you have friends here who will certainly know her."

I interrupted my impetuous companion by observing that he was evidently under some misapprehension as to the social relations of the English abroad. Even upon the doubtful supposition that the unknown lady and I had some common acquaintance in Homburg, it by no means followed that I could venture to request an introduction to her for myself—still less for a friend.

"Besides," I added, "all sorts of people travel nowadays: this lady may be a duchess, or she may be a tailor's daughter. In the first case, you see, she would probably decline to have anything to say to me; and in the second I should not particularly care about knowing her."

He appeared to be rather surprised than shaken by these objections. For a few seconds he contemplated me wonderingly, stroking his moustache, and murmuring, "What a pitee!" but his self-confidence was not long in returning to him.

"Never mind!" he resumed cheerfully; "we must make the attempt—that can do no harm. You will try to make yourself presented to

her to-night, and if you succeed, you will present me to-morrow morning."

I don't think it struck him for a moment that there was anything cool in this proposal. He uttered it in the most matter-of-fact tone in the world, patted me encouragingly on the shoulder, and then, remarking that Herr von Wallwitz would be waiting for him, said he would leave me to accomplish my mission. I afterwards found that he was in the habit of issuing his behests in this calm manner, and that, somehow or other, they were generally obeyed.

Whether it was owing to the power of Count Waldemar's reliance upon human friendliness, or to the pliancy of my own nature, which has led me into many a scrape first and last, I can't say; but certain it is that in this instance he gained his point. For, as chance would have it, the very first person whom I met on returning to the terrace, where the lamps were now lighted, and where the fashionable world of Homburg was gossiping, flirting, and promenading to the accompaniment of an excellent band, was little Tommy Tufnell, who knows, or says he knows, everybody from the Prince of Wales downwards; and as, immediately after this encounter, I happened to espy the fair unknown sitting in the midst of a circle of friends, I took the opportunity to ask my companion whether he could give me any information about her, at the same time expressing a careless wish to make her acquaintance. Tommy, of course, knew her perfectly well—most intimately, in fact—had known her people all his life. "She was a Miss Grey—Warwickshire Greys, you know," he observed explanatorily. He further informed me that she was a widow, and that her present name was Seymour. "Married poor Jack Seymour of the 25th Hussars," he continued. "You remember Jack, of course. No? Ah, well, he was a baddish lot, poor fellow. Broke his neck out hunting—just as well perhaps. Had D.T. twice, and was not over and above kind to his wife, I'm afraid. She is here with her aunt, Mrs. Grey, and her cousins—charming people. Come along, and I'll introduce you. Upon my word, Clifford, you old fellows!—when you get away from your wives, and come abroad on the loose, there's no end to the games you're up to. All safe with me, you know—shan't say anything about it to Mrs. Clifford," adds the facetious Tommy, wagging his head and nudging me after a favourite fashion of his, which I am quite sure he would abandon if he only knew how very much I dislike it.

Presently I was making my best bow before the little group of ladies above mentioned. The two young men whom I had seen entering the gardens with them stopped talking and stared, evidently wondering what the deuce this tiresome old fogey wanted; but as I showed no disposition to interrupt their respective flirtations with the pretty Miss Greys, they soon began to whisper again, and ceased to notice me. Tufnell obligingly engaged Mrs. Grey, a stout, good-humoured looking old person, in an animated discussion as to the effect of the Homburg waters upon suppressed gout; and Mrs. Seymour withdrew a corner of her dress from a

chair which stood conveniently at her side. I availed myself of the tacit permission thus conveyed, and dropped into it, profiting by the light of an adjacent gas-lamp to survey at my leisure the lady who had made so facile a conquest of Count Waldemar.

I saw a slim, but well-proportioned figure, clad in a handsome silk dress, the cut of which, even to my masculine eyes, betrayed the hand of an artist—a face neither beautiful nor plain, surmounted by a profusion of little fair curls arranged, according to the fashion of the day, so as to conceal the forehead, a picturesque hat, a pair of diamond solitaire earrings—upon the whole a person completely unremarkable, but at the same time (to use an adjective which I abhor, but cannot replace), decidedly stylish. Why anyone should have fallen in love with Mrs. Seymour at first sight it was not very easy to understand, though, taking her altogether, she made a favourable impression upon me. She had a frank, pleasant smile and clear grey eyes, and talked away agreeably enough, in an easy conventional way, about Homburg, about the recent Goodwood meeting, the latest scandal, and what not. In short she was so exactly like everybody else that I had no hesitation in crediting her with just so much of good nature, common sense, selfishness, and solid principle as are required to make up a well-balanced character, nor any doubt but that she would be quite the last woman in the world to marry a scatterbrained German hussar, after a courtship of three days' duration.

She bowed or nodded to so many of the passers-by, during the time that I was sitting beside her, that I formed a shrewd guess that, among the many obstacles which seemed to lie in the path of my audacious young friend, that most formidable one of wealth was not likely to be wanting. Later in the evening I again came across Tommy Tufnell in the Cursaal, whither I had repaired to have a look at the young people dancing before I went to bed, and I took occasion to question him upon this point.

"Oh, yes, she is very well off," answered Tommy carelessly; "that is, comfortably off, you know—three or four thousand a year, or something like that, I should think, and no children. It would have been more if poor Seymour had gone over to the majority a little sooner. He always lived beyond his income, and latterly he lost rather heavily on the turf."

Mentally summing up, as I walked home, all that I had heard and seen of Mrs. Seymour, I came to the conclusion that to introduce Count Waldemar to her would be merely to cause disappointment to him, annoyance to her, and inconvenience to myself; and I therefore determined that I would do nothing of the sort. Had I been a little better acquainted with the young Würtemberger, I should not have made this resolution; for I subsequently discovered him to be one of those people who invariably get their own way, whereas I, for some occult reason, seldom or never get mine.

When I went down to the springs at half-past seven the next morn-

ing, in obedience to the rule laid down for me by my doctor, whom should I see approaching the Elisabethen-Brunnen but Mrs. Seymour. She looked very nice and fresh in her cotton dress, and saluted me with a friendly nod and smile. Side by side we drained our bitter draught, and then, as neither of us was provided with a companion, we could not well help turning away to go through the prescribed twenty minutes of moderate exercise together. We took our way down the shady avenue so familiar to Englishmen, while the morning sun streamed through the leaves above our heads, throwing long blue shadows from the trees across the dewy grass of the park, while the throng of water-drinkers tramped steadily up and down, and the bandsmen in their kiosk scraped and tootled away as merrily as if they really enjoyed making melody at that unnatural hour. Half London met or passed us as we walked. Peers and tradesmen, judges and generals, members of Parliament and members of the Stock Exchange, they plodded on—they, their wives and their daughters—a queer miscellany of Anglo-Saxon samples, without a single German, barring H.S.H. the Grand Duke of Halbacker, among them. I had just pointed out this remarkable circumstance to my fair companion when a sudden grip of my left arm above the elbow warned me that I had spoken too hastily. Here, sure enough, was a German, and one who had no notion of being ignored either.

"Goot morning!" he cried cheerily. "Now this is a very fortunate thing, that I just happen to meet you."

I was not quite so sure of that; but I answered him civilly, and he hooked himself on to me without any ceremony. I resumed my conversation with Mrs. Seymour, and after we had progressed a few yards, Count Waldemar began poking me with his elbow in a way which I understood, but did not choose to notice. Finding these gentle hints of no avail, he followed them up presently by such a tremendous blow in my ribs that I positively staggered under it. I looked up at him reproachfully, shook my head, and tried to form with my lips the words, "Can't be done. Will explain afterwards." But it was no good,

"I hear not one wort von wass you say," was his response, delivered in stentorian tones: after which he continued, without lowering his voice in the least, "Will you not do me the honour to present me to malame?"

What could I do?

"Mrs. Seymour, will you allow me to introduce Count Waldemar von Ravensburg," says I, perhaps a little sulkily; and I noticed that a mischievous gleam of amusement swept across the lady's face as she returned Count Waldemar's profound bow. No doubt he had been making eyes at her with that thoroughness of purpose which distinguished his every deed.

Now that I had acted contrary to my better judgment, and done what was required of me, it obviously remained only that I should take myself off; and indeed it was time for my second glass of water. So,

when we had reached the Elisabethen-Brunnen, whither we all three returned together, I judiciously caught sight of a friend, and slipped away.

While listening to the complaints of old Mr. Porteous upon the subject of his gouty toes, I kept an eye upon the Count and the widow, who were sustaining an animated dialogue on the further side of the spring. I saw her finish her potion; I saw him seize the empty glass, hand it to the attendant maiden to be refilled, and drain it with a gusto for which the inherent properties of the water were hardly sufficient to account; I saw him repeat this foolhardy action twice—thrice, and then walk away at Mrs. Seymour's side as coolly as you please. I believe he would have pocketed the tumbler, like Sir Walter Scott, had not his uniform been far too tight to permit of such a proceeding.

Merciful powers! three glasses of Elisabethen straight off the reel! And I who am allowed but two; and must walk about for twenty minutes after the first, and for an hour after the second, under peril of I know not what awful consequences! I took a couple of turns along the avenue beside Porteous's bath-chair, and then concluded my walk in the company of some other fellow-sufferers; but I heard little of what they said, for I could not take my eyes off that young man. I watched him as the islanders watched Saint Paul of old, waiting for tardy Nemesis to overtake him, and I was almost disappointed to see that he came out of the ordeal as scathless as the apostle. My faith in my favourite spring received a blow that morning from which it has never fully recovered. Meanwhile the unconscious disturber of my peace was to all appearance getting on at a great pace with Mrs. Seymour. Their conversation did not appear to flag for a moment; and every now and then the sound of his laughter reached my ears above the din of the band, the shuffling of footsteps, and the buzz of many voices. Such a jolly, joyous laugh as it was! No snigger, nor cackle, nor half-smothered outburst, but a fine rich ho-ho-ho! as natural and irrepressible as the song of a bird, and, to my ears, nearly as musical. I declare that, if I had been a woman, I should have felt three-parts inclined to marry Count Waldemar for the mere sake of his laugh, knowing that it could only proceed from the most manly and honest of hearts.

He caught me up after I had set my face homewards, and clapped me on the shoulder with much warmth. "You are my very good friend," he was good enough to say. "I shall never forget wass you have done for me."

"You have nothing to thank me for. I should not have introduced you if you had not forced me into doing so," I replied candidly. "The truth is, there is no chance for you. I know my countrywomen better than you can do, and I assure you that, though Mrs. Seymour may find it amusing enough to hear you talk, she will no more think of accepting your offer (if you are foolish enough to make her one) than she would of drinking three glasses of mineral water, highly charged with carbonic

acid gas, because your lips had happened to touch the rim of the tumbler."

"Now, that we shall see," he rejoined, in no way disconcerted.

"Setting aside the question of your nationality and of her very slight acquaintance with you," I continued, "I must tell you that she is a woman of considerable fortune."

"Ja—so?" quoth he, quite imperturbably. "That is all the better; for I am myself a poor man. Money brings not happiness, but it is no bad addition to happiness."

The perfect good faith with which this copybook maxim was enunciated was in its way inimitable. It was clearly absurd to waste more words upon one so ignorant of the first guiding principles of civilised society, so I went home to breakfast.

II.

I am one of those who look back with regret to the palmy old days of MM. Blanc and Bénazet. I never could see that the interests of public morality required the suppression of the gaming-tables, nor, for that matter, that it is the legitimate province of governments to look after the morals of law-abiding people at all. It has always seemed to me that, if I had gambling propensities, it would be far better for me to indulge them in public than in private. Those who stake against the Bank play with an adversary who at least has no cards up his sleeve, who expects no "revenge" from a winner, who neither takes nor offers I O U's, who gains without unseemly exultation, and may be "broken" without being ruined. Of course I know all about the clerks who used to rob their masters' tills, and the peasants whose hardly earned wages used to disappear on Saturday nights over the green cloth; but an obligatory deposit of twenty pounds or so, to be returned on the departure of the visitor, would have effectually excluded these simple folks; and really, if our rulers are to begin protecting us against ourselves, where are they to stop? Why should we not be forbidden to back a horse, or to invest our money in South American securities, or to go out in wet weather without an umbrella and cork soles?

I feel the more free to say all this inasmuch as neither M. Blanc nor M. Bénazet ever made a single thaler out of me, except in indirect ways. It is not from any love of *trente et quarante* or *roulette* in themselves that I would fain see a restoration of those merry monarchs, but because their little kingdoms, which were once so joyous, are now left desolate, or nearly so. Their flower-gardens are growing less flowery ever year; their well-mown lawns are well-mown no longer; their paths are grass-grown, or strewed with falling leaves; their *prime donne* and Parisian actors find more lucrative summer engagements elsewhere; the very gilding on their palace walls is beginning to tarnish, and will, perhaps, not be renewed; for where is the money to come from?

Hömburg, it is true, is more highly favoured than its neighbours,

fashion having chosen to decree of late years that it should be the proper thing for the English great world to repair thither for a time at the close of the London season; and I must confess that now, when I do my annual three weeks of water-drinking, I mix in a more aristocratic as well as more respectable society than of yore. But then it is a considerably duller one. With the exception of lawn-tennis and dancing, neither of which relaxations are altogether suitable to the age of a majority of the *curgäste*, Homburg is somewhat wanting in amusements in these latter days; and I suppose that is why everybody was so determined to be present at the steeplechases mentioned to me by Count Waldemar, that, on the appointed day, there was not a carriage to be had in the town for love or money. I myself was glad enough to accept the offer of a box-seat from some friends; for, anxious though I was to see how my new friend would acquit himself in the saddle, I had no idea of trudging two or three miles under a blazing sun for that or any other purpose.

The improvised course was pleasantly situated upon a slope of the Taunus mountains, commanding a wide view of the rolling plain on which Homburg stands, of yellow cornfields and waving woods, and the spires of Frankfort glittering in the distance. Mounted policemen in spiked helmets were galloping hither and thither without any ostensible object; flags were fluttering, a military band was in full blast; a large concourse of country people in holiday garb lined the hillside, and a triple row of carriages, displaying much quaint variety in build, was drawn up in the neighbourhood of the winning-post.

In one of the latter I soon made out Mrs. Seymour, of whom, after the exchange of a few commonplaces, I could not forbear from inquiring her opinion of Herr von Ravensburg. She laughed heartily, as at some diverting reminiscence:

"Charming!" she replied. "Thank you so very much for introducing him to me. I don't know when I have met anyone who has made me laugh so much."

I doubted whether this were exactly the impression the young gentleman had intended to produce, and I said so.

"He does not intend to produce any impression at all," answered Mrs. Seymour. "That is just what makes him so delightful. Instead of thinking about himself, as most Englishmen do, he thinks about the person he is talking to—and tells you what he thinks, too, in the most innocent manner."

"Did he tell you what he thought of you?" I asked.

"He did indeed. He said I wore false hair, and that that was very bad taste. Also he informed me that I ought not to go down to the springs in the morning alone."

"How very rude of him! Did he say nothing more than that?"

"Oh, yes, he paid me some compliments. He could hardly do less after being so plain-spoken. Ah, here he is. Now we shall have some fun."

The dialogue that ensued was funny enough in all conscience, but I doubt whether Mrs. Seymour fully appreciated the humour of it. To an onlooker nothing could have been more comical than the freak of fate which had brought together these two widely differing types of humanity, and had inspired each of them with a desire to penetrate beneath the outer crust of the other's individuality. By education, by habit, in thought and in mode of expression, they were as remote from one another as a Chinaman from a Choctaw; and I question whether they had a single quality in common, unless it were that of good-nature. Mrs. Seymour understood, no doubt, that this young German was greatly smitten with her—she must have been blind indeed to have ignored that—but I think that her comprehension of him began and ended there. As for him, he palpably could make nothing of the English lady whose charms had conquered his heart. It was easy to see that he was a little shocked, as well as fascinated, by her freedom of manner. The idioms of her fashionable slang puzzled him, and he could not quite follow her quick repartees. More than once I caught him gazing at her with a look of troubled bewilderment in his blue eyes, which gradually melted into a smile as reflection brought him a clue to her meaning.

"Ah, you wass laughing at me," he would exclaim, breaking into one of his own hearty peals at this remarkable discovery. And then fat Mrs. Grey would laugh too, without knowing why; and so by degrees we all became very friendly and merry.

In the meantime the afternoon was wearing on. The three first events on the card—steeplechases they called them, but the obstacles to be surmounted were not of a very formidable kind—were disposed of, and the time was approaching for the great race of the day, in which Count Waldemar was to take part. We all wished him success when he left us, and, as he hurried away, I noticed that he was twirling between his finger and thumb a white rose very much resembling a cluster of those flowers which Mrs. Seymour wore in the front of her dress.

After a short delay the riders came out, and thundered past us, one by one—a yellow cap and jacket steering a big-boned, fiddle-headed roan; a blue jacket and black sleeves struggling with a chestnut who seemed a little too much for him; then some half-dozen others, whose colours, to tell the truth, I have forgotten, and likewise their horses. Last of all Count Waldemar cantered by, mounted on a little brown horse whose looks did not take the fancy of the ladies. Nor, for that matter, were they much better satisfied with the appearance of the Count himself. He wore his uniform—a queer costume, certainly, in which to ride a race—and what had he done with that white rose but stuck it in the side of his flat cap, where, I must confess, it looked excessively absurd and conspicuous. Mrs. Seymour was not a little annoyed, I think, by this bold advertisement of her favour, but she was too much a woman of the world to make mountains out of mole-hills. However, she unfastened her own roses from her dress, and tossed them into the hood of the car-

riage, saying plainly that she did not wish to be laughed at by all Homburg.

I am not a sporting man myself, and should never think of trusting to my own judgment in a matter of horseflesh. Therefore, although I was by no means so displeased as my companions with Count Waldemar's mount, I did not venture to say anything to excite their hopes until I had consulted a racing man of my acquaintance, whom I found near the judge's box, surveying the scene with hat cocked and arms akimbo, patronage, not unmingled with disdain, expressed in his gaze.

"Good wear-and-tear little nag. Might win, I should say, over a long course like this, if his owner knows how to ride him," was the verdict of this oracle. "The roan's the favourite, they tell me, but Lord bless you! looking at a horse'll never show you what he can do, especially with these fellows up. Lay you six sovereigns to four against the little brown, if you like, just to give the thing an interest, you know."

Modestly accepting this offer, I returned to tell Mrs. Seymour that I thought our man had as good a chance as anybody; and had just time to clamber up on to the box of her carriage, and get out my field-glasses, before a start was effected.

As I have already intimated, I have no pretension to say in what manner a race should or should not be ridden; but, dear me, the pace at which those young men dashed off, and the way they rushed at their fences! The yellow jacket took the lead, and kept it; the others were all together, a couple of lengths or so behind him—whipping and spurring, some of them, before they had accomplished a fourth of the distance. I was glad to see Count Waldemar lying well in the rear of this charge of cavalry, sitting still in his saddle, and evidently biding his time, like a sensible man. His little horse, with whom he seemed to be upon terms of perfect mutual understanding, popped over the fences cleverly enough, and looked full of running.

The race was twice round the course, and when the first circuit had been completed, it was clear to the most inexperienced eye that there were only three horses in it—the roan, the chestnut, and the brown.

Of the remaining competitors, one had gone the wrong side of a flag, and had pulled up, two had come to grief, and the others were hopelessly beaten. The roan was still ahead; the chestnut, all in a lather, was separated from him by a few lengths; and the brown was a little further behind than I quite liked to see him. Now, however, he began to creep slowly up; at every jump he perceptibly gained ground, and before very long secured the second place. This order of going was maintained up to the last fence, over which yellow-jacket lifted the roan as if it had been a five-barred gate instead of a modest little hurdle. Count Waldemar slipped past him while he was still in the air, and cantered in without once lifting his whip.

"I am so glad!" cried Mrs. Seymour, as soon as she could make her

voice heard above the acclamations that greeted this finish. "He did ride well, did not he, Mr. Clifford?"

"Couldn't have ridden better," I responded heartily, thinking of my six pounds and of the knowingness I had displayed in picking out the winner. "You see I was not very far wrong. I must say for myself that, though I don't profess to know much about racing, I have a pretty good eye for a horse, and——"

"Oh, but it wasn't the horse at all," interrupted Mrs. Seymour rather unkindly. "Anybody could see that that ugly little thing would have had no chance whatever if your friend had not ridden so perfectly. I wonder whether he is very much pleased."

"He looks so, at all events," remarked Mrs. Grey.

In truth the countenance of the victor, who was just now being led away in triumph by a crowd of his comrades, wore an expression of delight which he made no attempt to conceal. He had dropped his reins, and was throwing his arms about and talking eagerly, evidently explaining what the nature of his tactics had been, while all his features literally beamed with glee. Those who have happened to observe the face of a very small boy who has astonished everybody by a clever catch at cricket, will have some idea of Count Waldemar as he appeared in this moment of success. Only to look at him did one's heart good, and, as I watched him, I rejoiced more than ever in his victory, for I saw then how dreadfully disappointed he would have been if he had lost.

It is hardly necessary to relate how he eventually reappeared beside Mrs. Seymour's carriage, how he was received by the ladies with warm congratulations, and how every incident in the race had to be recorded in detail. I, for my part, having said what was proper, benevolently took away Mrs. Grey to look at the water-jump, perceiving that, if Count Waldemar was ever to make any impression upon the heart of the widow, now would be his opportunity.

No doubt he made good use of his time. I left the race-course without seeing him again; but happening to dine that evening at the Cursaal, I had the satisfaction of witnessing from afar a well-attended and somewhat uproarious banquet, at which he was the chief guest, and which was given, the waiter told me, by the *Herren Offiziere* who had taken part in the steeplechases. A silver cup of surpassing hideousness, displayed in the middle of the table, was, my informant added, the trophy won by the hero of the day; the Herr Graf's health was about to be proposed, and doubtless he would make a speech in reply. Distance debarred me from enjoying the Herr Graf's eloquence; but judging from the applause it elicited, I conclude that it was worthy of him and of the occasion, and I observed with pleasure that his high spirits had not deserted him.

While I was drinking my cup of black coffee in the open air afterwards, he came out and joined me, as I had half expected that he would do. I asked him whether closer inspection had lessened his admiration of

my countrywoman's charms, and he said, Not at all. On the contrary, he was more than ever convinced that he was now in love for the first and only time in his life, and more than ever determined that Mrs. Seymour should, ere long, change her name for that of Gräfin von Ravensburg. At the same time he gave me to understand that love had not blinded him to certain imperfections in the lady of his choice. He took exception to sundry tricks of voice and gesture, which, with a German's instinct for spying out the infinitely little, he had remarked in her; he pronounced her to be too *emancipirt*, by which, I take it, he meant "fast," and feared that the poetical side of her nature had not been sufficiently developed. But these, after all, he concluded, stretching out his long legs, and blowing a cloud of smoke into the still evening air, were but trifles, which marriage, and a residence in the cultured society of Stuttgart, would soon correct.

"Do you know," said I, "I think you are about the most conceited young man I ever came across?"

He opened his eyes in genuine amazement.

"Conceited!" he cried; "now that has never been said of me before. What for do you call me conceited?"

I pointed out to him that modest men do not, as a rule, expect ladies to fall in love with them at first sight.

"Ah, that is your English notion. You consider yourselves the first nation in the world, and yet it is rare that you will find an Englishman who does not affect to speak against his country. That you call modesty, but I think it is a great foolishness, for you do not mean wass you say. And so mit other things. I do not expect as every lady shall fall in love with me—no! But one—that is another thing. If it has happened to me to love her, why should she not love me? I am very sure that your wife has loved you before she has married you."

"An impartial study of Mrs. Clifford's character during some twenty years of married life would have led me to form a somewhat different conclusion," I answered; "but doubtless you know best. I can assure you, however, that I have never had the audacity to offer marriage to anybody within a week of my first meeting with her."

"Perhaps," said he gravely, "you have never met the lady whom Gott has meant to be your wife. If you had, you would know that it is of no importance whether a man shall speak in two days or in two years. For me, I have no choice. I must join my regiment to-morrow, and so it is necessary that I declare myself to-night."

"And pray how are you going to find your opportunity?"

"Ah, for that I have had to employ a little diplomacy," he answered, pronouncing the word "*diplomacee*," with a strong emphasis upon the last syllable, and accompanying it with a look of profound cunning which I would not have missed for worlds. "I have arranged to meet these ladies at the band, and to show them the race-cup, which, as you know, is in the restaurant. Now, diess is my plan. I join them when they

are already seated, and I say: 'One lady will be so kind and keep the chairs while I take the other indoors.' I take Mrs. Seymour first, and then—you understand."

He went off presently to carry out this wily stratagem, having first promised to call at my hotel early the next morning, and let me hear the result of his attempt.

Somehow or other I could not help fancying that there might be a chance for him. Women like youth and good looks and proficiency in manly sports and a pretty uniform, and Mrs. Seymour was rich enough to indulge in a caprice. I had taken so strong a liking to the young fellow myself during the three days of our intimacy, that it did not seem to me an absolute impossibility that a lady should have fallen in love with him within as brief a period. I ought of course to have known better. I ought to have remembered that we do not live in an age of romantic marriages and love at first sight, and to have foreseen that Mrs. Seymour would receive the young German's declaration exactly as ninety-nine women out of any hundred would do; but I suppose Count Waldemar's self-confidence must have slightly disturbed the balance of my judgment; and besides, I am always more prone to look at the sentimental side of things after dark than during the daytime.

With the return of morning my common sense recovered its sway, and I was not surprised when my breakfast was interrupted by the entrance of Count Waldemar, with a rather long face and a confession of failure upon his lips. He was disappointed, but far from despairing, and assured me that he had no intention of accepting this check as a final defeat.

"I have been reflecting all night in my inside," he said; "and I perceive that I have been too hasty. No matter!—*aufgeschoben ist nicht aufgehoben*, as we say—to delay is not to break off. I shall meet her again, and then I shall know better how to act."

And so, with a hearty shake of the hand at parting, and a cordial invitation to beat up his quarters at Stuttgart if ever my wanderings should lead me that way, he set off for the railway-station.

III.

Shortly afterwards I myself left Homburg, having completed the period of my "cure;" and if at the end of a week I had not quite forgotten Count Waldemar and Mrs. Seymour, I had at all events ceased to think about them and their destinies. On one's way through the world one is for ever catching glimpses of disconnected dramas—the opening of a farce, the second act of a comedy, the tail of a tragedy. Accident interests us for a time in the doings and sufferings of the actors, and accident hurries them out of sight and out of mind again, with their stories half told.

Accident it was—or destiny, I can't say which; certainly it was not

inclination—that took me, in the autumn of that same year, to Hyères, in company with my wife, and Mrs. Seymour could give no more satisfactory explanation of her presence in that dull little winter station. I ran up against her, on the Place des Palmiers, a few days after my arrival; and if I had been Friday and she Robinson Crusoe, she could not have hailed me with a greater show of delight.

"I am so very glad to see you!" she exclaimed. "In an evil hour I made up my mind to winter in the south, and three weeks ago I came here with my cousin, Miss Grey, whom you may remember at Homburg; and now, after I have taken a villa for six months, we have discovered how cordially we hate the place. We know hardly anybody, we have nothing to do, and, in short, we are bored to death. I do hope you are going to spend the winter here."

I said I did not think that I should be in Hyères very long, but that Mrs. Clifford, I believed, intended remaining for several months; after which I could hardly avoid adding that I hoped soon to have the pleasure of introducing my wife to Mrs. Seymour.

The truth is, that my satisfaction at meeting with that lady was tempered by some misgivings as to the probable nature of her reception by Mrs. Clifford, who is not a little particular in the matter of chance acquaintances, and who has never had any confidence at all in her husband's powers of discernment. In the present instance, however, my fears proved to be groundless; for when Mrs. Seymour came to call, it transpired, in the course of conversation, that before her marriage she had been one of the Warwickshire Greys (whoever they may be), and that, of course, made it all right. My wife pronounced her to be a really delightful person, and declared emphatically that she already felt a sincere interest in her future welfare.

The full significance of the latter phrase, which at the time I thought rather uncalled for, did not strike me until a few days later. It had happened that, upon our arrival at the Hôtel d'Orient, we had found already installed there a certain young man named Everard, a budding diplomatist with whom I am upon tolerably intimate terms, and whom I had been much astonished to discover spending his leave in a spot so remote from the charms of society. It was not until I had found out that he was in the habit of passing the greater part of his days and the whole of his evenings at Mrs. Seymour's pretty villa on the wooded hillside, that my sagacity led me to suspect what Mrs. Clifford, with her finer feminine wit, had divined from the outset. Now, as this young man was a prime favourite with my wife—for indeed he was connected with I know not how many noble houses—and as, owing to an unfortunate tardiness of birth for which he was in no way responsible, he had but a poor share of this world's gear, it was not difficult to understand that lady's benevolent anxiety with regard to Mrs. Seymour's prospective happiness.

I solemnly declare that I had no objection in the world to the scheme hinted at above. I simply took no interest in it at all, one way or the

other. It had nothing to do with me, and I make it a rule never to interfere in my neighbours' affairs. And yet Mrs. Clifford avers to this day that I consistently opposed it; that I did so merely with the object of annoying her, and that certain vexatious events which subsequently occurred would never have taken place at all but for me. Of the injustice, not to say the absurdity, of these accusations, I will leave those to judge who shall have the patience to peruse this narrative to its close. One thing, at all events, I can conscientiously affirm: that it never so much as entered my head to think of Count Waldemar in connection with the subject; for how could I possibly foresee that a lieutenant of German hussars, quartered in remote Stuttgart, would appear in the extreme south of France without a moment's notice, and create all manner of discord and unpleasantness in our midst? This, however, is precisely what happened.

It was a bitter cold evening in December. All day long a furious and icy *mistral* had been sweeping over the bare hills, driving clouds of dust before it, ripping branches from the olives and evergreen-oaks, chilling the poor exotic palms, bursting open windows, slamming doors, and irritating beyond all bearing the nerves of luckless strangers. I was sitting in the smoking-room of the hotel with young Everard, cowering over a wood fire, and bewailing the inclemency of this quasi-southern climate.

"Is it for this," I moaned, "that we have left our comfortable London home at the mercy of a crew of unprincipled servants? Is it for this that I have sacrificed my club, and my rubber of whist, and the improving society of my friends? Is it for this that we have crossed the Channel in a gale of wind, and faced the miseries of the most comfortless railway journey in the whole world? Is it for this——"

"There's the omnibus come in from the station," interrupted Everard. "More deluded unfortunates in search of warmth, I suppose. How they must be cursing their doctors!"

The front door was flung open, letting in a gust of cold air from without. A heavy trunk was let down with a bang upon the stone floor. Some noisy, cheerful person came stumping in, laughing and talking with the landlord,—

And fragments of his mighty voice
Came rolling on the wind.

"Not much wrong with *his* lungs, anyhow," remarked Everard.

Could I doubt for a moment the origin of that tremendous ho-ho-ho! It needed not the landlord's smiling announcement that "*un ami à monsieur*" had arrived; it needed not the sight of a stalwart, fur-enveloped figure following closely upon his heels, to prepare me for the agonising grip of both hands, whereby Count Waldemar evinced his joy and surprise at this unexpected renewal of our friendly relations.

He sat down before the fire, stretched out his interminable legs, and explained that he had got a month's leave of absence from his regiment. He entered at once into conversation with Everard, and would have

divulged the cause of his journey to Hyères in the course of the first five minutes if I had not contrived to catch his eye, and check him by a succession of hideous grimaces. He acknowledged these signals by a wink of surpassing craftiness, and a laughing ejaculation of "*Schön! schön! Werde nicht mehr plaudern,*" which, seeing that Everard speaks German as well as he does English, was not exactly calculated to allay any suspicions that might have begun to trouble that young gentleman's mind. Still, the evening passed off without any untoward incident, and that was really more than I had ventured to hope for at first.

The next morning I had to introduce the Count to Mrs. Clifford, and to this hour I cannot imagine how I could have been so insane as to tell her privately beforehand that he was related to the Grand Duke of Halbacker.

Sometimes I am almost tempted to think that even white lies—and this one, I do maintain, was of the most harmless order—never prosper. My sole aim was to give my young friend a chance of securing Mrs. Clifford's goodwill; but, alas! the result achieved was the exact contrary of this. For Everard, who, as I ought to have remembered, had served as attaché at more than one German Court, assured her that the Grand Duke had no such connections, and my lame explanation that I was always making mistakes about people, and that I must have been thinking of somebody else, did not avail to prevent her from setting down poor Count Waldemar as an impostor, and openly speaking of him as such to the other inmates of the hotel. Altogether it was a most unfortunate occurrence, and did me much harm in the estimation of those about me.

I have neither space nor desire to speak of the botheration which ensued; of the solemn warning which my wife thought fit to address to Mrs. Seymour; of the latter's appeal to the person principally concerned, and of my own clumsy attempts to get out of an awkward predicament. The upshot of it all was that I believe I was looked upon, for some time, as more or less of a detected swindler by everybody, except, indeed, by my dear and excellent Count, who would never have understood the mean feeling which had led me to make him out a greater man than he was. Now the von Ravensburgs were of just so good descent as the Grand Dukes of Halbacker, he said; and if I had made a little mistake, who was the worse for it? "Tell me, my dear Mrs. Seymour, why does Mrs. Cleefford go out of the room whenever I enter? Does she take me perhaps for a *peeck-pocket*?" He roared with laughter at this funny notion.

The matter-of-course way in which Mrs. Seymour had taken Count Waldemar's sudden appearance upon the scene puzzled me so much that at last I felt impelled to ask her whether she had not been rather astonished to see him again.

"Oh, no," she answered quietly. "He has written to me several times since we parted at Homburg, and he always spoke in his letters of paying us a flying visit in the course of the winter."

"Oh, really?" said I. "I didn't know;" and then I changed the subject.

A man does not reach my time of life, nor spend the best part of half a century principally in cultivating the society of his fellow-creatures, to be scandalised by the flirtations of a pretty woman. Consciousness of my own many infirmities has ever imposed upon me a large measure of toleration for those of others; and when all is said and done, flirting, taken in the abstract, is no very heinous offence. Nevertheless, Mrs. Seymour's conduct in the present instance disappointed me. I had given her credit for less vanity and more consideration for the feelings of her neighbours. Was it worth while to inflict an expensive and fruitless journey upon this innocent young German; to set a hitherto harmonious party by the ears, and to get me into trouble with Mrs. Clifford, merely for the amusement of playing off one admirer against another? I was really vexed with Mrs. Seymour, and all the more so because I had seen a good deal of her during my sojourn at Hyères, and had discovered the existence of many excellent qualities beneath her somewhat conventional exterior.

At the same time, I could not but admire the skill with which she contrived to receive both the young men every day, and yet so to arrange matters as that their visits should not clash. I myself, having so few sources of amusement at command in the place, strolled up to her villa pretty frequently, and invariably found one or other of the rivals there, but never the two of them together. There was always some pretext, directly traceable to Mrs. Seymour's influence, for the dismissal of the absentee. Now it was Everard who had taken Miss Grey out for a ride; now it was Count Waldemar who had kindly undertaken to execute a few commissions at Toulon, and who was to be driven back from the station by Mrs. Seymour in her pony-carriage. Sometimes the German, sometimes the Englishman, was sent down to the sea-shore, three miles away, to pick up the many-coloured shells which abound on that coast. I happen to have an elementary knowledge of conchology, and I had the curiosity to put a few questions to Mrs. Seymour on the subject, thereby convincing myself that if she knew a crustacean from a mollusk it was about as much as she did. She laughed when I taxed her with deliberate deceit, and frankly admitted that she had found it advisable to keep her friends as much as possible apart.

"They did not get on well together from the first," said she; "and I think it is always so much better not to try and make people like each other unless they are inclined that way. Count Waldemar is much too good-natured to quarrel with anybody, but he has a way of criticising you to your face, and of contradicting you flatly if you do not happen to agree with him, which people who do not know him are sometimes apt to take amiss. And then, you know, he does rather monopolise the conversation. When he is in the room nobody else gets much chance of making himself heard, and Mr. Everard, who is very well informed and clever, and all that, is accustomed to be listened to."

"Precisely so; and that, of course, is quite enough to account for two good fellows hating one another like poison," says I, with delicate irony.

"Well, you know, Englishmen and foreigners hardly ever do manage to hit it off," she answered, in the most innocent manner in the world; "but I should not say that they exactly hated one another."

They did, though, or something very like it. Although, owing to the able tactics above alluded to, they seldom or never met at Mrs. Seymour's, every day brought them together half-a-dozen times at the Hôtel d'Orient; and, to use Mrs. Clifford's epigrammatical expression, they never fell in with one another without falling out. She, of course, laid all the blame of this unpleasantness upon Count Waldemar, whereas I was inclined to think that Everard had been the original aggressor: but I must confess that at the end of a week there was not a pin to choose between them. Each did his best to be objectionable to the other, and in so doing, succeeded in being a most decided nuisance to everybody else.

In my capacity of neutral, I had more opportunities than I cared about of hearing both sides of the question.

"Of all the offensive bores I ever met," Everard would exclaim, "that long-legged German friend of yours is the most irrepressible. I can't understand how a fellow can be so intrusive. It is easy to see that poor Mrs. Seymour is tired to death of him; but I suppose she doesn't like to be rude, and nothing short of kicking the man out of the house would ever keep him away from it. I assure you he is there morning, noon and night."

"So is somebody else, as far as that goes," I make bold to observe.

"You mean me? Ah, but I'm different," answers Everard, and saunters away without deigning to explain wherein the difference lies.

Count Waldemar, on his side, showed no less bitterness and a good deal more jealousy. He had a very poor opinion of the Englishman, whom he spoke of as "a most effeminate person—wass we call *ein junger Geck*," but admitted, for all that, that he regarded him as a formidable rival.

"I know not what to think," he said, shaking his head despondently one evening when I was smoking my after-dinner cigar with him, Everard having, as we both knew, betaken himself to the villa on the hill. "When I am alone mit her, then is she so kind, so pleasant as I could wish for nothing more; but if this abominable fellow is expected, at once I am sent away, and that is a thing wass I cannot endure. Very likely he is sitting beside her at this moment, in the very chair I was sitting in myself this morning."

"Why, of course he is," I answered stupidly. "You don't suppose that he sits at one end of the room and Mrs. Seymour at the other, do you?"

Up jumps the Count, and begins putting on his military great-coat with the air of one who has a definite purpose in view.

"What are you going to do?" I inquired apprehensively.

"I go to Mrs. Seymour's," he replied. "Do you come mit me? Yes, my friend, you shall come, and we will see for ourselves whether or no she is making me a fool."

He took down my hat from the hook on which it was hanging, clapped it on my head, pushed my passive arms into the sleeves of my overcoat, and marched me out into the moonlight without another word. I had got accustomed to his ways by this time, and made no resistance, though I felt that we were about to do a foolish thing.

On reaching the villa, we were kept some time waiting before the servant answered our ring, and when we entered the drawing-room, there was nothing in the relative attitudes of its three inmates to excite any jealous suspicions. Miss Grey was at the piano; Everard, standing behind her, was apparently intent upon turning over the pages of her music-book, and Mrs. Seymour was demurely occupied with a piece of embroidery by the fireside. The latter welcomed us with her wonted cordiality, and looked, I thought, more amused than annoyed; but Everard sighed impatiently, and whispered something to Miss Grey.

Count Waldemar dropped into a chair at Mrs. Seymour's side, and I am bound to say that he contrived to perform this simple action in a markedly aggressive manner. Everard, however, did not take up the challenge, if such it were intended to be, but went on conversing in a low tone with Miss Grey.

Finding myself thus constrained to play the ungrateful part of a fifth person, I rose presently, and stepped out on to the verandah which surrounded the house.

I have nothing to say against the climate of Hyères at such times as the *mistral* is not blowing. On this December night the air was as mild as that of an English June. There were roses in bloom in the garden; a faint breeze was stirring among the olive-trees on the slopes; the moon made a silvery pathway across the sea beneath, softening all the landscape, and casting such a fairy-like glamour over the arid rocks of the Hyères islands that their ancient title of the *Iles d'Or* no longer seemed inappropriate. Somebody had left a cane armchair out on the verandah. I took possession of it, lighted a cigar, and was soon lost in those pathetic memories which are the peculiar property of moonlight and middle age.

How long I had been thus pleasantly occupied I cannot say, when an increased volume of sound proceeding from within attracted my attention, and made me aware that Count Waldemar was delivering one of his harangues. This was followed by some barely audible sentences enunciated in Everard's slow and somewhat drawling accents, and then I heard the Count's voice saying distinctly and rather sulkily:

"Sir, you make a mistake; the Germans are a most order-loving

people. That we love Prussia I do not say—no; but we shall remain loyal to the Emperor because he is the natural head of the Reich; and it is only very ignorant and foolish persons who maintain the contrary."

"Thanks. I fully appreciate the flattering inference. All the same, I expect to see the German Republic before I die."

"*Pfui!*"

"Herr von Ravensburg, do you know that you are rather rude?"

"Rude? *Aber!*—when a man speaks to me of the German Republic!"

At this juncture I judged it appropriate to appear upon the scene, after the fashion of the heathen deities of old, and to avert the impending strife.

"Are you young men aware that it is past eleven o'clock?" I asked. "If you stay here much longer, you will not only wear out Mrs. Seymour's patience, but also that of the hotel-porter, who is not fond of late hours. Come, let us all say good-night, and be off."

As I marched out of the house between the two rivals, I felt that I had displayed a tact for which everybody owed me some thanks; but my self-approval was not destined to last long. Just as we reached the limits of the small domain, Count Waldemar, who all this time had been only too evidently struggling with inward wrath, stopped short, drew himself up to his full height, and looking over my head at Everard, ejaculated,

"Sir!"

"Do be quiet," I whispered entreatingly; but he never heeded me.

"Sir," he repeated. "Just now you have said that I was rude. Before the ladies I could not notice your worts, but now I must ask you what you have meant?"

"Exactly what I said," answered Everard, curtly.

"In Germany we consider such speeches an insult."

"Do you? Well, really I can't help it. If a man dislikes being called a boor, he ought not to behave boorishly."

Count Waldemar told me afterwards that Everard had been sneering at him, and trying to provoke him, all the evening through: otherwise he would not have lost his temper even after so direct an affront as this. As it was, his self-control deserted him entirely. He took two strides towards the offender, caught him up in his arms like a baby, held him for an instant poised aloft, and then, with one mighty heave, tossed him clear over the low bank by which we were standing, into a conveniently adjacent clump of cactus-bushes.

I am sorry to say that, shocked and indignant though I was at this deed of violence upon the person of a friend and a fellow-countryman, the first emotion that took possession of me was one of most unseasonable mirth; and this, gaining strength by reason of my efforts to conquer it, soon mastered me so completely that I was fain to sit me down upon the grass and hold my sides, while Count Waldemar, all his ill-humour dis-

persed in that one explosion of wrath, woke the echoes with peal after peal of uproarious laughter, and from the cactus-bushes below arose the maledictions of the outraged Everard.

To a man smarting both mentally and physically as Everard must have been doing, such conduct as this may well have appeared as inexcusable as it was exasperating. I suppose that under any circumstances he would have been very angry; he was simply furious now, and satisfaction he vowed he would have.

How we got back to the hotel I can hardly say. I daresay we were a sufficiently comical trio—Count Waldemar still shaking with laughter, Everard bristling with thorns like a hedgehog, and I insisting with vain volubility upon the necessity for mutual apologies. All I know is that, when I went to bed that night, I closed my eyes upon the prospect of having to play the absurd, not to say hazardous, part of second in a duel.

IV.

It was Count Waldemar who, despite my entreaties and protestations, would have it that I must act as his friend in the carrying out of this piece of murderous folly. He was very sorry to put me to any inconvenience, he said; but since he was not upon speaking terms with any other man in Hyères, he could not help himself; and when I declared that no duel should take place at all with my consent, he simply answered that that did not concern him, he being the receiver, not the giver of the challenge. He added, as a matter of detail, that he had no intention of apologising for the hasty act into which his temper had betrayed him on the previous evening, and that he did not in the least regret it.

"I have seen very well, last night, that Mrs. Seymour is more fond of him as of me," he sighed; "but when she shall hear how I have sitted him in the meedst of those thorns, then must she certainly laugh. Yes, I shall have my revenge!"

And with this unworthy sentiment he lounged out into the sunshine, while I went upstairs to see what I could do with the other fire-eater.

I found Everard deep in conversation with a certain M. de Beaulieu, a young Parisian, who was reluctantly spending a few weeks in the south in order to soothe the last moments of a wealthy and asthmatic aunt. I was sorry to see him there, for I had guessed the cause of his presence even before Everard, rising from his chair, said—

"If you come from Herr von Ravensburg, perhaps I had better leave you with M. de Beaulieu, who has kindly consented to act for me in this matter."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow! pray don't stir," I answered, determined to make light of the whole business if I could. "I certainly do come from Count Waldemar—that is, in a sort of way you know. I mean, I did not tell him I was coming; and my only object in doing so is to

suggest that you and he should make up your difference in a friendly way."

"I don't quite see how that is to be managed," observed Everard quietly.

"Now, Everard, be reasonable. For goodness' sake don't let us have a row. You see, the fact is you were both in the wrong: you provoked him, and he forgot himself; each of you will surely admit that much. Very well; you have only to acknowledge frankly——"

"Mr. Clifford, what would you do if a fellow twice your size chucked you into a small plantation of prickly-pears?"

"Well, I can't exactly say upon the spur of the moment; but one thing is certain—no Englishman is expected to fight duels in these days."

"No man who prefers to take a licking is ever expected to fight. For my own part, I have lived so much abroad that I have become a little foreign in my habits; and as I am a particularly good shot, and a very fair swordsman, and have already been out three times, I see no reason why I should not prevent your German friend from insulting strangers for the future."

"Why, you bloodthirsty young ruffian, do you mean to say you would kill the man?"

"Not if I can help it; but I mean hitting him, I can tell you. And if I were you, Mr. Clifford, I would keep out of the quarrel. You can do as you like, of course; and it is no business of mine: but I think it is only fair to warn you that all this will probably end by getting you into a mess with the police."

That was all I obtained from Mr. Everard, who now left the room. For one brief moment I did think of following his advice—of declaring that I washed my hands of these two young idiots and their broils, or, better still, of packing up my portmanteau and taking the afternoon train to Nice. But it was only for a moment. Upon further reflection, I felt that I could not leave poor Waldemar thus basely in the lurch; and so I sat down sadly, and began to use my poor powers of eloquence upon M. de Beaulieu. That gentleman heard me out very patiently, and then convinced me, by a few brief but pithy sentences, that nothing short of an abject written apology would satisfy the wounded honour of his principal. At the end of a quarter of an hour I had actually consented, on Count Waldemar's behalf, to a hostile meeting with pistols at daybreak; and to this hour I cannot see what alternative course was open to me. Some vague hints I did venture to throw out with reference to blank cartridges, and the possibility of satisfying wounded honour without risk to life or limb; but upon this M. de Beaulieu became so angry, and asked me with such an air of outraged dignity what I took him for, that I was compelled to retreat rather hastily from that position.

Thus it came to pass that, after a disturbed night, I found myself stealing out of the Hôtel d'Orient about the hour of sunrise, accompanied

by three other malefactors, whom, at that dismal moment, I most warmly commended in my heart to the devil. I don't know what I have done that I should be for ever getting into these discreditable scrapes; I don't know why such troubles should come upon me more than upon other in-offensive members of society; but, as a fact, they do.

Silently we plodded up the stony hillside, and through the woods of olive and cork-trees that clothed it. The branches overhead and the scanty herbage at our feet were glistening with dew; the air was still and crisp; the sunlight fell upon a pale blue sea and upon a white sail or two in the offing.

It seemed monstrous that two young fellows in the prime of life should be setting out to kill one another on such a lovely, peaceful morning; and we all of us, I fancy, felt the influence of the scene in a greater or less degree. I can answer for it that one of the party, who is neither a rich nor a specially generous man, would gladly have signed a cheque for a thousand pounds there and then, at the imminent risk of having it subsequently dishonoured, if by that means he could have obliterated the events of the two preceding days.

But as that could not be, and as Providence did not think fit to intervene in the person of a gendarme or any other *deus ex machina*, we pursued our way without let or hindrance, and presently reached the entrance of a little dell, shut in on every side by rocks and trees, where we all instinctively came to a standstill. The light might have been better, M. de Beaulieu said, surveying the spot with a critical eye; but one could not have everything, and it was a pretty place for the purpose—a very pretty place. This Frenchman's spirits appeared to rise with the approach of the combat, and he set about measuring the distance—only twenty paces, alas!—as briskly and cheerfully as if he had been making the requisite preparations for a cotillon. Everard and Count Waldemar stood a short space apart, each with his eyes fixed upon the ground, while I, with the pistol-case under my arm, seated myself upon the stump of a tree, shivering a little, and feeling as utterly miserable as I ever felt in my life.

At this supreme moment a distinct sound of approaching footsteps fell upon my ear. I wheeled round, and found myself face to face with—heavens and earth!—Mrs. Seymour and Miss Grey.

"Good morning, Mr. Clifford," said the former, without any demonstration of surprise. "Is it not a delicious morning for a walk? Is that Mr. Everard? And Herr von Ravensburg too! Dear me, what can you all be doing? And what have you got under your arm?"

"A—a botanical case—or rather, I should say, a paint-box. I mean, I really don't know; it doesn't belong to me, but to M. de Beaulieu. Here, catch hold of it," says I, thrusting the horrid thing into the hands of its owner, who had now joined the group, looking very blank. "Are you—er—out for a walk too?" I continued with an inane simper; for in truth I hardly knew what I was saying.

"As you see," answered Mrs. Seymour, demurely. "A walk in the early morning gives one such a capital appetite, does it not? And, *à propos*, I want you all to come back and breakfast with me."

A prompt and general murmur, like a response in church, testified to the unanimity with which we declined this kind invitation.

"Oh, but I will take no refusal," insisted Mrs. Seymour. "You cannot possibly have any engagement at this hour of the day, and I do not intend to let you escape. Miss Grey shall take charge of Mr. Everard, I will look after Mr. Clifford, and the two other gentlemen shall walk between us, so that we may not lose sight of them."

There was nothing to be done but to surrender to this determined lady—I don't deny that one of us was no very reluctant prisoner—and so our tragedy was converted into a farce, and we marched down the narrow pathway, two and two, in somewhat ludicrous procession—first Everard and Miss Grey; then Count Waldemar and M. de Beaulieu, the latter ineffectually striving to conceal his murderous implements under an overcoat; finally Mrs. Seymour and myself.

"Well, Mr. Clifford," began my companion, as soon as we were fairly under way.

"Well, Mrs. Seymour?"

Of course I saw that she knew what we had been about.

"I should have believed this of a great many people—of Count Waldemar, for instance, who is a foreigner, or of Mr. Everard, who has lived so much abroad—but not of you."

"Go on. Blame me, and you will be quite in the fashion. That is what everybody invariably does under all circumstances; and I have long since given up self-defence as a mere waste of time. I am quite prepared to admit that everything has been my fault from beginning to end, and to apologise to you all round. It was I, of course, who brought an unfortunate German all the way from Würtemberg to Hyères upon a fool's errand; it was I who flirted with two young men to that extent that one of them had to ease his feelings by plunging the other head over heels into a cactus-bush: it was I who——"

"Mr. Clifford, you are excessively rude, and, begging your pardon, excessively silly too. I never was accused of flirting before in my life. I can make allowances for Herr von Ravensburg, because he is—well, because, for many reasons, it is not unnatural that he should misunderstand things; but that you, who particularly pride yourself upon your insight into human nature and the causes of people's actions, should not have seen long ago that Mr. Everard is engaged to my cousin, Miss Grey, is more than I can comprehend. The engagement would have been announced before this, only I did not want it talked about just at first, because Mr. Everard is not very well off, and my people rather objected to the match. Now, however, everything is settled; and when Count Waldemar has apologised, as I intend him to do before breakfast, I hope we may all shake hands, and forget how foolish some of us have been.

But I must say I shall have some little difficulty in pardoning you for doing your best to kill the two firmest friends I have in the world."

"Will you tell me how on earth I was to prevent a man who refused to apologise from fighting another who insisted upon an apology?"

"How? Oh, in a hundred ways. You had only to inform the police, or to send a line to me. Nothing could be more simple."

"Quite out of the question—altogether contrary to etiquette," returned I, trying to look as if I had had a large experience of duels. "Ladies know nothing about these affairs. By-the-bye, may I ask how you managed to arrive upon the scene so opportunely?"

"I shall not answer any questions which might get innocent people into trouble. But I may mention that if you had not yelled with laughter in that unseemly way, the night that Count Waldemar behaved so disgracefully, my maid would not have run out into the garden to see what was the matter."

"Oho! Is your maid that very well-dressed lady whom I sometimes see walking with Everard's man on Sunday afternoons?"

"Never mind. Will you go on now, and entertain M. de Beaulieu, please. And may I ask you to send Herr von Ravensburg to me. I have a few words to say to him."

The nature of those few words I was enabled to surmise by the guttural ejaculations which reached me, every now and again, as I descended the hill beside the Frenchman. Just as we approached the house, Count Waldemar brushed past me, looking a trifle crestfallen, and hurried up to the couple who were waiting for us at the door. I was too far off to hear what passed; but the Count's utterances were always embellished with so much pantomime that it was easy to form a pretty accurate guess at what he was saying, so long as he was anywhere within range of eyesight. I saw him standing, hat in hand, before Miss Grey, rigid as to his legs, but violently agitated from the waist upwards. I saw him fling his arms about wildly, and feign to tear out his hair by handfuls. Then he turned to his late antagonist, bowed three several times most profoundly, indulged in a little more gesticulation, and finally seized him by both hands, and almost zhook him off his feet. Everard did not look more than half pleased; but Count Waldemar was not the man to be abashed by a little coldness. Having accomplished his task, he faced about, and came striding back towards us with his wonted cheerful equanimity very nearly restored.

"Now I have made all goot," said he, in the tone of a man who expects to be thanked. "Mrs. Seymour, I hope you are content mit me?"

Mrs. Seymour laughed. "Let us go in to breakfast," she said, without replying to the Count's question.

I cannot say that that breakfast was in any sense a success. Our hostess was charming, and did all in her power to set us at our ease, and Count Waldemar, as usual, talked a great deal; but, upon the whole, I

think everybody was very glad when the repast came to an end. I, for my part, was conscious that, however excusably, I had made a fool of myself; M. de Beaulieu barely disguised his dissatisfaction at the tame conclusion of the affair in which his services had been enlisted; Miss Grey never opened her lips, and Everard was evidently rather sulkily. I suppose those thorns still rankled a little.

He and his *fiancée* seized the earliest opportunity that offered to escape into the garden, and immediately afterwards M. de Beaulieu took his leave. Upon this I said I thought I would go out on to the verandah, and smoke a cigar, and as neither of the two remaining members of the company offered any objection to my departure, I suited the action to the word.

It was very pleasant out on the verandah. The air was warm, yet clear; the stony, hilly landscape was beautiful with numberless delicate gradations of colour; a silvery ribbon of surf fringed the blue sea, which stretched away towards the far horizon to meet as blue a sky. In the garden at my feet, the standard roses, yellow, pink, creamy, and white, were drinking in the sunshine; and every now and then I caught a glimpse of Everard and Miss Grey pacing slowly side by side among the myrtles and tamarisks. Surveying this idyllic prospect with quiet contentment, I fell into a pleasant day-dream, which, by an easy transition, resolved itself ere long into a refreshing slumber. When I awoke it was to find Count Waldemar and Mrs. Seymour standing before me hand in hand.

"My dear Mr. Clifford," said the former oratorically, "you have once done me the great kindness to present me to Mrs. Seymour; permit me, in return, to present to you the future Gräfin von Ravensburg."

It is always a little difficult to know what to say upon these occasions, and the difficulty is perhaps rather specially great to a man who has been caught asleep, and has not had time to re-assemble his ideas. However, it can matter very little what his remarks may be so that he makes them short, and relieves the lovers of his presence with all convenient despatch; and in this branch of my duty I did not fail.

Mrs. Clifford, to whom I communicated the news later in the day, received it with some strong expressions of disapproval.

"I do not remember ever to have heard of a more ill-omened and unsuitable marriage," said she. "An Englishwoman of good birth and fortune to ally herself with a German adventurer! What possible chance of happiness can she have?"

To a certain extent, I confess that I shared my wife's apprehensions. Looking at the utter dissimilarity of their ways of life and thought, I could not but foresee that Count Waldemar and his wife would have need of much mutual forbearance; and no one knows better than I how limited is the stock of that useful quality accorded to most mortals. The match did not sound a promising one; but then, as everybody

knows, the most promising matches often turn out badly in the long run, and *vice versa*. Marriage, which has more than one attribute in common with death, resembles it especially in this, that no human being can venture to predict what manner of life is likely to succeed to it.

I am glad, at all events, to be able to state that, when I saw the Count and Countess von Ravensburg in London, a few days since, they both looked remarkably cheerful and contented.

The Street Gossips.

A SONG FOR DANCING, ATTRIBUTED TO LORENZO DE' MEDICI.

—♦—

SINCE you beg with such a grace,
How can I refuse a song,
Wholesome, honest, void of wrong,
On the follies of the place?

Courteously on you I call;
Listen well to what I sing:
For my roundelay to all
May perchance instruction bring,
And of life good lessoning.—
When in company you meet,
Or sit spinning, all the street
Clamours like a market-place.

Thirty of you there may be;
Twenty-nine are sure to buzz,
And the single silent she
Racks her brains about her coz:—
Mrs. Buzz and Mrs. Huzz,
Mind your work, my ditty saith;
Do not gossip till your breath
Fails and leaves you black of face!

Governments go out and in:—
You the truth must needs discover.
Is a girl about to win
A brave husband in her lover?—
Straight you set to talk him o'er:
"Is he wealthy?" "Does his coat
Fit?" "And has he got a vote?"
"Who's his father?" "What's his race?"

Out of window one head pokes ;
 Twenty others do the same :—
 Chatter, clatter!—creaks and croaks
 All the year the same old game!—
 "See my spinning!" cries one dame,
 "Five long ells of cloth, I trow!"
 Cries another, "Mine must go,
 Drat it, to the bleaching base!"

"Devil take the fowl!" says one:
 "Mine are all bewitched, I guess;
 Cocks and hens with vermin run,
 Mangy, filthy, featherless."
 Says another: "I confess
 Every hair I drop, I keep—
 Plague upon it, in a heap
 Falling off to my disgrace!"

If you see a fellow walk
 Up or down the street and back,
 How you nod and wink and talk,
 Hurry-skurry, cluck and clack!—
 "What I wonder, does he lack
 Here about?"—"There's something wrong!"
 Till the poor man's made a song
 For the female populace.

It were well you gave no thought
 To such idle company;
 Shun these gossips, care for nought
 But the business that you ply.
 You who chatter, you who cry,
 Heed my words; be wise, I pray:
 Fewer, shorter stories say;
 Bide at home, and mind your place.

Since you beg with such a grace,
 How can I refuse a song,
 Wholesome, honest, void of wrong,
 On the follies of the place?

J. A. S.

WILMINGTON AREA
FREE
LIBRARY



"I KNOW THAT MY BUSINESS LIVES!"

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Within the Precincts.

CHAPTER X.

THE MINOR CANON.



R. ASHFORD had not said much to Miss Despard on the way home; it was but crossing the road, a brief progress which left little room for conversation, and the Signor was better acquainted with her than he was. Besides, the Minor Canon was not a man who could carry on a conversation with several people at a time, or open his heart to more listeners than one. He could sometimes be eloquent with a single interlocutor, but he was a silent man in society, with

very little to say for himself, even when his companions were of the most congenial kind. He was an unsuccessful man, and carried in his soul, though without any bitterness, the burden of his own success. He was a man of "good connections," but none of his connections had done anything for him—and he had considerable talents, which had done nothing for him. He had got a scholarship, but no other distinction, at the University. Nobody was at all clear how this came about. He was not idle, he was not careless, but he did not succeed; his talents were not those that win success. At twenty he published a little volume of poetry, which was "full of promise." At thirty he brought out a learned treatise on some matter of classical erudition, which, as it is too high for us to understand, we will not venture to name. And nothing came of that; his poems were not sold, neither was his treatise. His fellow-scholars (for he was a true scholar, and a ripe and good one)

occupied themselves with pulling holes in his coat, writing whole pages to show that he had taken a wrong view of a special passage. And there was something worse than this that he had done. He had put a wrong accent upon a Greek word. We tremble to mention such a crime, but it cannot be slurred over, for it was one of the heaviest troubles in Mr. Ashford's life. Whether it was his fault or the printer's fault will never be known till the day of judgment, and perhaps not even then : for it seems more than likely that a mistake in an accent, or even the absence of the accent altogether, will not affect the reckoning at that decisive moment ; but this was what had been done. Not once—which might have been an accident, or carelessness in correcting the press, such a misfortune as might occur to any man—but a dozen times, if not more, had this crime been perpetrated. It disfigured at least the half of his book. It was a mistake which no properly conducted fourth-form boy would have been guilty of. So everybody said ; and it crushed the unlucky man. Even now, five years after, that incorrect accent coloured his life. He went in mourning for it all his days. He could not forget it himself, even if other people might have been willing to forget it. It seemed to justify and explain all the failures in his career. Everybody had wondered why he did not get a fellowship after he had taken his degree, but this explained everything. A man capable of making such a mistake ! The buzz that arose in the University never died out of his ears. Robuster persons might laugh, but Ernest Ashford never got over it. It weighed him down for the rest of his days.

Nor was he a man to thrive much in his profession. He tried a curacy or two, but he was neither High Church enough for the High, nor Low Church enough for the Low. And he could not get on with the poor, his rectors said. Their misery appalled his gentle soul. He emptied his poor pockets in the first wretched house he went into, and retreated to his lodgings after he had done so, with a heart all aching and bleeding, and crying out against the pain he saw. He was not of the fibre which can take other people's sufferings placidly, though he had a fine nerve in bearing his own. This, no doubt, was weakness in him ; and in all probability he got imposed upon on every side ; but the fact was he could not support the wretchedness of others, and when he had given them every sixpence he had, and had entreated them to be comforted, he fled from them with anguish in his heart. He could not eat or drink for weeks after for thinking that there were people in the world near at hand who had little or nothing on their board. He suffered more from this than his fellow-curate did from neuralgia, or his rector from biliousness, and he did what neither of these martyrs felt themselves compelled to do—he fled from the trouble he could not cope with. They quoted Scripture to him, and proved from the text "The poor ye have always with you" that nothing better was to be expected. But he answered with a passionate protestation that God could never mean that, and fled—which, indeed, was not a brave thing to do, and proved the

weakness of his character. Thus the Church found him wanting, as well as the University. And when at last he settled down into a corner where at least he could get his living tranquilly, it was not by means of his talents or education, but because of a quality which was really accidental, the possession of a beautiful voice. This possession was so entirely adventitious that he was not even a learned musician, nor had he given much of his time to this study. But he had one of those voices, rich, and tender and sweet, which go beyond science, which are delicious even when they are wrong, and please the hearers when they perplex the choir, and drive the conductor out of his senses. Mr. Ashford did not do this, having an ear almost as delicate as his voice, but both of these were gifts of nature, and not improved by training to the degree which the Signor could have wished. He had been persuaded to try for the Minor Canonry of St. Michael's almost against his will; for to be a singing man, even in the highest grade, did not please his fancy. But no one had been able to stand before him. The Signor had strongly supported another competitor, a man with twice the science of Mr. Ashford; but even the Signor had been obliged to confess that his friend's voice was not to be compared with that of the successful candidate. And after knocking about the world for a dozen years without any real place or standing ground, Ernest Ashford found himself at thirty-five suited with a life that was altogether harmonious to his nature, but which he felt half humiliated to have gained, not by his talents or his learning, or anything that was any credit to him, but by the mere natural accidental circumstance of his beautiful voice. He was half ashamed and humbled to think that all his education, which had cost so much, went for nothing in comparison with this chance talent which had cost him nothing, and that all his hopes and ambitions, which had mounted high, had come to no loftier result. But as, by fair means or foul, for a good or bad reason, life had at last found a suitable career for him, where he could be independent, and do some sort of work, such as it was, he soon became content. The worst thing about it (he said) was that it could not be called work at all. To go twice a day and sing beautiful music in one of the most beautiful churches in the world, would have been the highest pleasure, if it had not been the business of his life. He had never even been troubled by religious doubts which might have introduced a complication, but was of a nature simply devout, and born to go twice a day to church. When, however, he found himself thus, as it were, exalted over the common lot, he made an effort to bring himself down to the level of common mortality by taking pupils, an experiment which succeeded perfectly, and brought him into hot water so speedily that he no longer felt himself elevated above the level of mankind.

This was the man whom Lottie had seized the opportunity of making acquaintance with, and speaking to, that evening at the Deanery. Mr. Ashford was not badly treated at the Deanery to be only a Minor Canon. He was often enough asked to dinner. When there was not

anybody of much consequence about, the Dean was very willing to have him, for he was a gentleman, and talked very pleasantly, and could be silent (which he always was when the company was large) in a very agreeable, gentlemanly sort of way; not the silence of mere dullness and having nothing to say. But when there was a large dinner-party, and people of consequence were there, Lady Caroline would often ask Mr. Ashford to come in the evening, and he had come to understand (without being offended) that on these occasions he would probably be asked to sing. He was not offended, but he was amused, and sometimes, with a little well-bred malice, such as he had never shown in any other emergency of his life, would have a cold, and be unable to sing. He had not strength of mind to carry out this little stratagem when there seemed to be much need of his services, but now and then he would wind himself up to do it, with much simple satisfaction in his own cleverness. Mr. Ashford was well treated in the Cloisters generally. The other Canons, those whom Mrs. O'Shaughnessy called "the real Canons," were all more or less attentive to him. He had nothing to complain of in his lot. He had at this moment two pupils in hand: one, the son of Canon Uxbridge, whom he was endeavouring to prepare for the simple ordeal of an army examination, and another, who was clever, the son of the clergyman in the town, and aspiring to a university scholarship. In consequence of the unfortunate failure of that Greek accent it was but few engagements of this more ambitious kind that Mr. Ashford had; his work was usually confined to the simplicity of the military tests of knowledge; but the rector of St. Michael's was a man who knew what he was about, and naturally, with a sharp young scholar for ever on his traces, the gentle Minor Canon, conscious of having once committed an inaccuracy, was kept very much upon his p's and q's.

On the same day on which Rollo Ridsdale wrote for Lady Caroline that invitation to Lottie, of the terms of which Lady Caroline was so little aware, the Dean gave a verbal invitation to the same effect to Mr. Ashford in the vestry. "Will you dine with us to-day, Ashford?" he said. "My nephew Ridsdale, who is mad about music, and especially about this girl's voice who sang last night, has persuaded Lady Caroline to ask her again. Yourself and the Signor; I believe nobody else is coming. Ridsdale has got something to do with a new opera company, and he is wild to find an English prima donna——"

"Is Miss Despard likely to become a professional singer?" said the Minor Canon in some surprise.

"I am sure I can't tell—why not? They are poor, I suppose, or they would not be here; and I don't see why she shouldn't sing. Anyhow, Rollo is most anxious to try. He thinks she has a wonderful voice. He is apt to think anything wonderful which he himself has anything to do with, you know."

"She has a wonderful voice," said Mr. Ashford, with more decision than usual.

"But—pardon me if I interrupt," cried the Signor, who had come in while they were talking, "no method; no science. She wants training—the most careful training. The more beautiful a voice is by nature, the more evident is the want of education in it," the musician added, with meaning. He did not look at Mr. Ashford, but the reference was very unmistakable. The Dean looked at them, and smiled as he took up his shovel hat.

"I leave you to fight it out, Science against Nature," he said; "as long as you don't forget that you are both expected this evening at the Deanery—and to sit in judgment as well as to dine."

"I know what my judgment will be beforehand," said the Signor; "absolute want of education—but plenty of material for a good teacher to work upon."

"And mine is all the other way," Mr. Ashford said, with some of the vehemence of intellectual opposition, besides a natural partisanship. "A lovely voice, full of nature, and freshness, and expression—which you will spoil, and render artificial, and like anybody else's voice if you have your way."

"All excellence is the production of Art," said the Signor.

"*Poeta nascitur*"—said the Canon; and though the words are as well known as any slang, they exercised a certain subduing influence upon the musician, who was painfully aware that he himself was not educated, except in a professional way. The two men went out together through the door into the Great Cloister, from which they passed by an arched passage to the Minor Cloister, where was Mr. Ashford's house. Nothing could be more unlike than the tall, stooping, short-sighted scholar, and the dark keen Italianism of the Anglicised foreigner—the one man full of perception, seeing everything within his range at a glance, the other living in a glimmer of vague impressions, which took form but slowly in his mind. On the subject of their present discussion, however, Ashford had taken as distinct a view as the Signor. He had put himself on Lottie's side instinctively, with what we have called a natural partisanship. She was like himself, she sang as the birds sing—and though his own education after a few years of St. Michael's had so far progressed musically that he was as well aware of her deficiencies as the Signor, still he felt himself bound to be her champion. "I am not sure how far we have any right to discuss a young lady who has never done anything to provoke animadversion," he said, with an old-fashioned scrupulousness, as they threaded the shady passages. "I think it very unlikely that such a girl would ever consent to sing for the public."

"That is what she says," said the Signor, "but she can't understand what she is saying. Sing for the public! I suppose that means to her to appear before a crowd of people, to be stared at, criticised, brought down to the level of professional singers. The delight of raising a crowd to one's self, binding them into mutual sympathy, getting at the heart

underneath the cold English exterior, that is what the foolish girl never thinks of, and cannot understand."

"Ah!" said the Minor Canon. He was struck by this unexpected poetry in the Signor, who was not a poetical person. He said, "I don't think I thought of that either. I suppose, for my part, I am very old-fashioned. I don't like a woman to make an exhibition of herself."

"Do you suppose a real artist ever makes an exhibition of herself?" said the musician almost scornfully. "Do you suppose she thinks of herself? Oh, yes, of course there are varieties. Men will be men and women women; but anyone who has genius, who is above the common stock! However," he added, calming himself down, and giving a curious, alarmed glance at his companion, to see whether, perhaps, he was being laughed at for his enthusiasm, "there are other reasons, that you will allow to be solid reasons, for which I want to get hold of this Miss Despard. You know Purcell, my assistant, a young fellow of the greatest promise?"

"Purcell? oh, yes; you mean the son of——"

"I mean my pupil," said the Signor, hurriedly, with a flush of offence.

"I beg your pardon. I did not mean anything unkind. It was only to make sure whom you meant. I know he is a good musician and—everything that is good."

"He is a very fine fellow," said the Signor, still flushed and self-assertive. "There is nobody of whom I have a higher opinion. He is a better musician than I am, and full of promise. I expect him to reach the very top of his profession."

Mr. Ashford bowed. He had no objection to young Purcell's success: why should he be supposed to have any objection to it? but the conversation had wandered widely away from Miss Despard, in whom he was really interested, and his attention relaxed in a way which he could not disguise. This seemed to disturb the Signor still more. He faltered; he hesitated. At last he said with a sudden burst, "You think this has nothing to do with the subject we were discussing; but it has. Purcell, poor fellow! has a—romantic devotion; a passion which I can't as yet call anything but unhappy—for Miss Despard."

"For Miss Despard?"

The Minor Canon turned round at his own door with his key in his hand, lifting his eyes in wonder. "That is surely rather misplaced," he said the next moment, with much more sharpness than was usual to him, opening the door with a little extra energy and animation. He had no reason whatever for being annoyed, but he was annoyed, though he could not have told why.

"How misplaced?" said the Signor, following him up the little oak staircase, narrow and broken into short flights, which led to the rooms in which the Minor Canon lived. The landing at the top of the staircase was as large as any of the rooms to which it led, with that curious mis-

appropriation of space, but admirable success in picturesque effect, peculiar to old houses. There was a window in it, with a window-seat, and such a view as was not to be had out of St. Michael's, and the walls were of dark wainscot, with bits of rich old carving here and there. The Canon's little library led off from this and had the same view. It was lighted by three small, deep-set windows set in the outer wall of the Abbey, and consequently half as thick as the room was large. They were more like three pictures hung on the dark wall than mere openings for light, which indeed they supplied but sparingly, the thickness of the wall casting deep shadows between. And the walls, wherever they were visible, were dark oak, here and there shining with gleams of reflection, but making a sombre background, broken only by the russet colour of old books and the chance ornaments of gilding which embellished them. Mr. Ashford's writing-table, covered with books and papers, stood in front of the centre window. There was room for a visitor on the inner side between him and the bookcases on the further wall, and there was room for somebody in the deep recess of the window at his left hand; but that was all.

"How misplaced?" the Signor repeated, coming in and taking possession of the window-seat. "He is not perhaps what you call a gentleman by birth, but he is a great deal better. You and I know gentlemen by birth who—but don't let us talk blasphemy within the Precincts. I am a Tory. I take my stand upon birth and blood and primogeniture."

"And laugh at them?"

"Oh, not at all; on the contrary, I think they are very good for the country; but you and I have known gentlemen by birth—Well! my young Purcell is not one of these, but sprung from the soil. He is a capital musician; he is a rising young man. In what is he worse than the daughter of a commonplace old soldier, a needy, faded gentleman of a Chevalier?"

"Gently! gently! I cannot permit you to say anything against the Chevaliers. They are brave men, and men who have served their country——"

"Better than a good musician serves his?" cried the Signor. "You will not assert as much. Better than we serve the country who put a little tune and time into her, an idea of something better than fifes and drums?"

"My dear Rossinetti," said Mr. Ashford with some heat, "England had music in her before a single maestro had ever come from the South, and will have after——"

"No tragedy," said the Signor, with a low laugh, putting up his hand. "I am not a maestro, nor do I come from the South. I serve my country when I teach these knavish boys, that would rather be playing in the streets, to lengthen their snipped vowels. But suppose they do better who fight—I say nothing against that. I am not speaking of all the Chevaliers, but of one, and one who is very unlike the rest—the only

person who has anything to do with the argument—a wretched frequenter of taverns, admirer of milliners' girls, who is said to be going to marry some young woman of that class. Why should not Purcell, the best fellow in the world, be as good as he?"

"I don't know the father—and it is not the father Purcell has a romantic devotion for. But don't you see, Rossinetti, we are allowing ourselves to discuss the affairs of people we know nothing of, people we have no right to talk about. In short, we are *gossiping*, which is not a very appropriate occupation."

"Oh, there is a great deal of it done by other persons quite as dignified as we are," said the Signor with a smile; but he accepted the reproof and changed the subject. They sat together and talked, looking over the great width of the silent country, the trees and the winding river, the scattered villages, and the illuminated sky. How beautiful it was! fair enough of itself to make life sweeter to those who had it before their eyes. But the two men talked and took no notice. They might have been in a street in London for any difference it made.

When, however, the Signor was gone, Mr. Ashford having closed the door upon his visitor, came straying back to the window in which Rossinetti had been seated, and stood there gazing out vaguely. In all likelihood he saw nothing at all, for he was short-sighted, as has been said; but yet it is natural to seek the relief of the window and look out when there is something within of a confused and vaguely melancholy character to occupy one's thoughts. Twenty-four hours before Mr. Ashford had not known who Lottie Despard was. He had seen her in the Abbey, and perhaps had found, without knowing it, that sympathy in her face which establishes sometimes a kind of tacit friendship long before words. He thought now that this must have been the case; but he knew very little about her still—nothing except that she had a beautiful voice, a face that interested him, and something she wanted to talk to him about. What was it she wanted to talk to him about? He could not imagine what it could be, but he recollected very well how pleasant a thing it was when this beautiful young lady, lifting the long fringes which veiled them, turned upon him those beautiful blue eyes which (he thought) were capable of expressing more feeling than eyes of any other colour. Probably had Lottie's eyes been brown or grey Mr. Ashford would have been of exactly the same opinion. And to think of this creature as the beloved of Purcell gave him a shock. Purcell! it was not possible. No doubt he was a respectable fellow, very much to be applauded and encouraged:—but Mr. Ashford himself had nothing to do with Miss Despard; he was pleased to think that he should meet her again and hear her sing again, and he must try, he said to himself, to find an opportunity to ask her what it was about which she wanted to speak to him. Otherwise he had no hand, and wanted to have no hand, in this little conspiracy of which she seemed the unconscious object. On the contrary, his whole sympathies were with Lottie against the men who wanted to entrap her and make her a public

singer whether she would or not. He was glad she did not want it herself, and felt a warm sympathy with her in those natural prejudices against "making an exhibition of herself" which the Signor scorned so much. The Signor might scorn those shrinkings and shyness; they were altogether out of his way; he might not understand them. But Mr. Ashford understood them perfectly. He liked Lottie for having them, comprehended her, and felt for her. Anything rather than *that*, he thought, with a little tremulous warmth, as if she had been his sister. If there should be any discussion on this subject to-night at the Deanery, and she was in need of support, he would stand by her. Having made this resolution, he went back to his writing-table and sat down in his usual place, and put this intrusive business which did not in the least concern him, out of his mind.

The most intrusive subject! What had he to do with it? And yet it was not at all easy to get it out of his mind. He had not read three lines when he felt himself beginning to wonder why Rollo Ridsdale had chosen Miss Despard as his prima donna above everybody else, and why the Signor concerned himself so much about it. She had certainly a beautiful voice, but still voices as beautiful had been heard before. It could not be supposed that there was no one else equal to her. Why should they make so determined a set at this girl, who was a lady, and who had not expressed any wish or intention of being a singer? To be sure, she was very handsome as well, and her face was full of expression. And Rollo was a kind of enthusiast when he took anything in his head. Then there was the other imbroglia with the Signor and Purcell. What was Purcell to the Signor that he should take up his cause so warmly? But then, still more mysterious, what was it all to him, Ernest Ashford, that it should come between him and the book he was reading? Nothing could be more absurd. He got up after awhile, and went to the window again, where he finally settled himself with a volume of Shelley, to which he managed to fix the thoughts, which had been so absurdly disturbed by this stranger, and this question with which he had nothing to do. It was a very idle way of spending the afternoon, to recline in a deep window looking out upon miles of air and distance, and read Shelley; but it was better than getting involved in the mere gossip of St. Michael's, and turning over in his head against his will the private affairs of people whom he scarcely knew. This was the disadvantage of living in a small circle with so few interests, he said to himself. But he got delivered from the gossip by means of the poetry, and so lay there while the brilliant sunshine slanted from the west, now sending his thoughts abroad over the leafy English plain, now feeding his fancy with the poet among the Euganean hills.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER EVENING AT THE DEANERY.

MR. RIDSDALE had perhaps never touched, and rarely heard, anything so bad as the old cracked piano which Lottie had inherited from her mother, and which was of the square form now obsolete, of a kind which brokers (the only dealers in the article) consider very convenient, as combining the character of a piano and a sideboard. Very often had Lottie's piano served the purpose of a sideboard, but it was too far gone to be injured—nothing could make it worse. Nevertheless Mr. Ridsdale played the accompaniments upon it, without a word, to Lottie's admiration and wonder, for he seemed to be able to draw forth at his fingers' ends a volume of sound which she did not suppose to be within the power of the old instrument. He had brought several songs with him, being fully minded to hear her that morning, whatever obstacles might be in the way. But it so happened that there were no obstacles whatever in the way; and Mrs. O'Shaughnessy was of the greatest service as audience. With the true talent of a manager, Mr. Ridsdale addressed himself to the subjugation of his public. He placed before Lottie the song from "Marta," to which, hearing it thus named, Mrs. O'Shaughnessy prepared herself to listen with a certain amiable scorn. "Ah, we shall have you crying in five minutes," he said. "Is it me you're meaning?" she cried in high scorn. But the fact was that when the melting notes of "The Last Rose of Summer" came forth from Lottie's lips, Mrs. O'Shaughnessy was altogether taken by surprise, and carried out Rollo's prophecy to the letter by weeping abundantly. There was much of Mr. Ridsdale's music which Lottie could not sing—indeed, it would have been wonderful if she had been able to do so, as he had brought with him the finest *morceaux* of a dozen operas, and Lottie's musical education had been of the slightest. But he so praised, and flattered, and encouraged her, that she went on from song to song at his bidding, making the best attempt at them that was possible, while Mrs. O'Shaughnessy sat by and listened. Her presence there was of the utmost consequence to them. It at once converted Rollo's visit into something allowable and natural, and it gave him a pretence for beginning what was really an examination into Lottie's powers and compass, at once of voice and of intelligence. Lottie, innocent of any scheme, or of any motive he could have, save simple pleasure in her singing, exerted herself to please him with the same mixture of gratitude and happy prepossession with which she had thought of him for so long. If she could give a little pleasure to him who had given her his love and his heart (for what less could it be that he had given her!) it was her part, she thought, to do so. She felt that she owed him everything she could do for him, to recompense him for that gift which he had given her unawares. So she stood by him in a soft humility, not careful that she was showing her own ignorance, thinking only of pleasing him.

What did it matter if he were pleased whether she attained the highest excellence? She said sweetly, "I know I cannot do it, but if you wish it I will try," and attempted feats which in other circumstances would have appalled her. And the fact was, that thus forgetting herself, and thinking only of pleasing him, Lottie sang better than she had ever done in her life, better even than she had done in the Deanery on the previous night. She committed a thousand faults, but these faults were as nothing in comparison with the melody of her voice and the purity of her taste. Rollo became like one inspired. All the enthusiasm of an amateur, and all the zeal of an enterprising manager, were in him. The old piano rolled out notes of which in its own self it was quite incapable under his rapid fingers. He seemed to see her with all London before her, at her feet, and he (so to speak) at once the discoverer and the possessor of this new star. No wonder the old piano grew ecstatic under his touch; he who had gone through so many vicissitudes, who had made so many failures; at last it seemed evident to him that his fortune was made. Unfortunately (though that he forgot for the moment) he had felt his fortune to be made on several occasions before.

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy gave a great many nods and smiles when at last he went away. "I say nothing, me dear, but I have my eyesight," she said, "and a blind man could see what's in the wind. So that is how it is, Lottie, me darling? Well, well! I always said you were the prettiest girl that had been in the Lodges this many a year. I don't envy ye, me love, your rise in the world. And I hope, Lottie, when ye're me lady, ye'll not forget your old friends."

"How should I ever be my lady?" said Lottie; "indeed, Mrs. O'Shaughnessy, I don't know what you mean."

"No, me honey, the likes of you never do, till the right moment comes," said the old lady, going down the narrow stairs. She kissed her hand to Lottie, who looked after her from the window, as she appeared on the pavement outside, and, with her bonnet-strings flying loose, turned in at her own door. Her face was covered with smiles, and her mind full of a new interest. She could not refrain from going into the Major's little den, and telling him. "Nonsense!" the Major said, incredulous; "one of your mare's-nests." "Sure it was a great deal better than a mare, it was turtle-doves made the nest I'm thinking of," said Mrs. O'Shaughnessy; and she took off her bonnet and seated herself at her window, from which she inspected the world, with a new warmth of interest, determined not to lose a single incident in this new fairy tale.

Law came out of his room where he had been "reading" when Mrs. O'Shaughnessy went away. "What has all this shrieking been about?" said Law, "and thumping on that old beast of a piano? You are always at a fellow about reading, and when he does read you disturb him with your noise. How do you think I could get on with all that misailing going on? Who has been here?"

"Mr. Ridsdale has been here," said Lottie demurely. "He brought

me a note from Lady Caroline, and I am going again to the Deanery to-night."

Law whistled a long whew—ew! "Again, to-night! she'd better ask you to go and live there," said the astounded boy; and he said no more about his interrupted reading, but put his big book philosophically away; for who could begin to read again after all the disturbances of the morning, and after such a piece of news as this?

Lottie dressed herself with more care than ever that evening. She began to wish for ornaments, and to realise how few her decorations were; the little pearl locket was so small, and her arms seemed so bare without any bracelets. However, she made herself little bands of black velvet, and got the maid to fasten them on. She had never cared much for ornaments before. And she spent a much longer time than usual over the arrangement of her hair. Above all she wanted to look like a lady, to show that, though their choice of her was above what could have been expected, it was not above the level of what she was used to. *Their* choice of her—that was how it seemed to Lottie. The young lover had chosen, as it is fit the lover should do; but Lady Caroline had ratified his selection, and Lottie, proud, yet entirely humble in the tender humility born of gratitude, wanted to show that she could do credit to their choice. She read the note which purported to be Lady Caroline's over and over again; how kind it was! Lady Caroline's manner perhaps was not quite so kind. People could not control their manner. The kindest heart was often belied, Lottie was aware, by a stiffness, an awkwardness, perhaps only a shyness, which disguised their best intentions. But the very idea of asking her was kind, and the letter was so kind that she made up her mind never again to mistake Lady Caroline. She had a difficulty in expressing herself, no doubt. She was indolent perhaps. At her age and in her position it was not wonderful if one got indolent; but in her heart she was kind. This Lottie repeated to herself as she put the roses in her hair. In her heart Lady Caroline was kind; the girl felt sure that she could never mistake her, never be disappointed in her again. And in this spirit she tripped across the Dean's Walk, Mrs. O'Shaughnessy watching from her window. It was almost dark, but it was not one of the Signor's nights for practice, and only a few of the inhabitants of the Abbey Precincts were enjoying the air on the Terrace pavement. They all saw her as she came out in the twilight with her uncovered head. Law had gone out, and there was nobody to go with her this time to the Deanery door. But Lottie had no difficulty in finding an escort, as she came out, looking round her shyly to watch for a quiet moment when no one was about. Captain Temple came forward, who lived two doors off, and was passing as she came to the little garden gate. He was the preux chevalier of all the Chevaliers. He came forward with a fatherly smile upon his kind face. "You are looking for some one to go with you," he said; "your father has gone out. I saw him. Let me take his place."

"Oh, thanks! I am going to the Deanery. I thought Law would have waited for me."

"Law, like others of his age, has his own concerns to think of," said Captain Temple, "but I am used to this kind of work. You have heard of my girl, Miss Despard?"

"Yes, Captain Temple——" Lottie, touched suddenly in the sympathetic sentiment of her own beginning life, looked up at him with wistful eyes.

"She was a pretty creature, like yourself, my dear. My wife and I often talk of you and think you like her. She was lost to us before she went out of the world, and I think it broke her heart—as well as ours. Take care of the damp grass with your little white shoes."

"Oh, Captain Temple, do not come with me," said Lottie, with tears in her eyes. "I can go very well alone. It is too hard upon you."

"No—I like it, my dear. My wife cannot talk of it, but I like to talk of it. You must take care not to marry anyone that will carry you quite away from your father's house."

As if that would matter! as if papa would care! Lottie said in her heart, with a half pity, half envy, of Captain Temple's lost daughter; but this was but a superficial feeling in comparison with the great compassion she had for him. The old Chevalier took her across the road as tenderly and carefully as if even her little white shoes were worth caring for. There was a moist brightness about his eyes as he looked at her pretty figure. "The roses are just what you ought to wear," he said. "And whenever you want anyone to take care of you in this way, send for me; I shall like to do it. Shall I come back for you in case your father should be late?"

"Oh, Captain Temple, papa never minds! but it is quite easy to get back," she said, thinking that perhaps this time *he*——

"I think it is always best that a young lady should have her own attendant, and not depend on anyone to see her home," said the old Captain. And he rang the bell at the Deanery door, and took off his hat with a smile which almost made Lottie forget Lady Caroline. She went into the drawing-room accordingly much less timidly than she had ever done before, and no longer felt any fear of Mr. Jeremie, who admitted her, though he was a much more imposing person than Captain Temple. This shade of another life which had come over her seemed to protect Lottie, and strengthen her mind. The drawing-room was vaguely lighted with clusters of candles here and there, and at first she saw nobody, nor was there any indication held out to her that the mistress of the house was in the room, except the solemn tone of Jeremie's voice announcing her. Lottie thought Lady Caroline had not come in from the dining-room, and strayed about looking at the books and ornaments on the tables. She even began to hum an air quietly to herself, by way of keeping up her own courage, and it was not till she had almost taken her seat unawares on Lady Caroline's dress, extended on the sofa, that

she became aware that she was not alone. "Oh, I beg your pardon," she cried out in a sudden panic. "I thought there was no one in the room." Lady Caroline made no remark at all, except to say "How do you do, Miss Despard?" That was what she had made up her mind to say, feeling it to be quite enough for the occasion—and Lady Caroline did not easily change her mind when it was once made up. She thought it very impertinent of the girl to come in and look at the photographs on the tables, and even to take the liberty of singing, but there was no calculating what these sort of people might do. She had nearly sat down on Lady Caroline's feet! "This is what I put up with for Rollo," the poor lady said to herself; and it seemed to her that a great deal of gratitude from Rollo was certainly her due. She did not move, nor did she ask Miss Despard to sit down; but Lottie, half in fright, dropped into a chair very near the strange piece of still life on the sofa. The girl had been very much frightened to see her, and for a moment was speechless with the horror of it. Nearly to sit down upon Lady Caroline! and a moment of silence ensued. Lady Caroline did not feel in the least inclined to begin a conversation. She had permitted the young woman to be invited, and she had said "How do you do, Miss Despard?" and she did not know what more could be expected from her. So they sat close together in the large, half-visible, dimly-illuminated room, with the large window open to the night, and said nothing to each other. Lottie, who was the visitor, was embarrassed, but Lady Caroline was not embarrassed. She felt no more need to speak than did the table with the photographs upon it which Lottie had stopped to look at. As for Lottie, she bore it as long as she could, the stillness of the room, the flicker of the candles, the dash and fall of a moth now and then flying across the lights, and the immovable figure on the sofa with its feet tucked up, and floods of beautiful rich silk enveloping them. A strange sense that Lady Caroline was not living at all, that it was only the picture of a woman that was laid out on the sofa came over her. In her nervousness she began to tremble, then felt inclined to laugh. At last it became evident to Lottie that to speak was a necessity, to break the spell which might otherwise stupify her senses too.

"It is a beautiful night," was all she managed to say; could anything be more feeble? but Lady Caroline gave no reply. She made the usual little movement of her eyelids, which meant an assent; indeed it was not a remark which required reply. And the silence fell on them again as bad as ever. The night air blew in, the moths whirled about the candles, dashed against the globe of the lamp, dropped on the floor with fatal infinitesimal booms of tragic downfall; and Lady Caroline lay on the sofa, with eyes directed to vacancy, looking at nothing. Lottie, with the roses in her hair, and so much life tingling in her, could not endure it. She wanted to go and shake the vision on the sofa, she wanted to cry out and make some noise or other to save herself from the spell. At last, when she could keep silence no longer, she jumped up,

throwing over a small screen which stood near in her vehemence of action. "Shall I sing you something, Lady Caroline?" she said.

Lady Caroline was startled by the fall of the screen. She watched till it was picked up, actually looking at Lottie, which was some advance; then she said, "If you please, Miss Despard," in her calm tones. And Lottie, half out of herself, made a dash at the grand piano, though she knew she could not play. She struck a chord or two, trembling all over, and began to sing. This time she did not feel the neglect or unkindness of the way in which she was treated. It was a totally different sensation. A touch of panic, a touch of amusement was in it. She was afraid that she might be petrified too if she did nothing to break the spell. But as she began to sing, with a quaver in her voice, and a little shiver of nervous chilliness in her person, the door opened, and voices, half discerned figures of men, life, and movement, came pouring in. Lottie came to an abrupt stop in the middle of a bar.

"This will never do," said the suave Dean; "you make too much noise, Rollo. You have frightened Miss Despard in the middle of her song."

Then Rollo came forward into the light spot round the piano, looking very pale; he was a good deal more frightened than Lottie was. Could it be possible that she had made a false note? He was in an agony of horror and alarm. "I—make a noise!" he said; "my dear uncle!" He looked at her with appealing eyes full of anguish. "You were not—singing, Miss Despard? I am sure you were not singing, only trying the piano."

"I thought it would perhaps—amuse Lady Caroline." Lottie did not know what she had done that was wrong. The Signor wore an air of trouble too. Only Mr. Ashford's face, looking kindly at her, as one followed another into the light, reassured her. She turned to him with a little anxiety. "I cannot play; it is quite true; perhaps I ought not to have touched the piano," she said.

"You were startled," said the Minor Canon, kindly. "Your voice fluttered like those candles in the draught." The others still looked terribly serious, and did not speak.

"And I sang false," said Lottie; "I heard myself. It was terrible; but I thought I was stiffening into stone," she said, in an undertone, and she gave an alarmed look at Lady Caroline on the sofa. This restored the spirits of the other spectators, who looked at each other relieved.

"Thank heaven, she knew it," Rollo whispered to the Signor; "it was fright, pure fright—and my aunt——"

"What else did you suppose it was?" answered in the same tone, but with some scorn, the Signor.

"Miss Despard, don't think you are to be permitted to accompany yourself," said Rollo. "Here are two of us waiting your pleasure. Signor, I will not pretend to interfere when you are there. May we have again that song you were so good——? Ah, pardon me," he cried,

coming close to her to get the music. "I do not want to lose a minute. I have been on thorns this half-hour. I ought to have been here waiting ready to receive you, as you ought to be received."

"Oh, it did not matter," said Lottie, confused. "I am sorry I cannot play. I wanted—to try—to amuse Lady Caroline."

By this time the Signor had arranged the music on the piano, and began to play. The Dean had gone off to the other end of the room, where the evening paper, the last edition, had been laid awaiting him on a little table on which stood a reading-lamp. The green shade of the lamp concentrated the light upon the paper, and the white hands of the reader, and his long limbs and his little table, making a new picture in the large dim room. On the opposite side sat Lady Caroline, who had withdrawn her feet hastily from the sofa, and sat bolt upright as a tribute to the presence of "the gentlemen." These two pieces of still life appeared to Lottie vaguely through the partial gloom. The master and mistress of the house were paying no attention to the visitors. Such visitors as these were not of sufficient importance to be company, or to disturb their entertainers in the usual habits of their evening. Lady Caroline, indeed, seldom allowed herself to be disturbed by anyone. She put down her feet for the sake of her own dignity, but she did not feel called upon to make any further sacrifice. And as for Lottie, she was not happy among these three men. She shrank from Rollo, who was eyeing her with an anxiety which she could not understand, and longed for Mrs. O'Shaughnessy, or, indeed, any woman to stand by her. Her heart sank, and she shivered again with that chill which is of the nerves and fancy. The Dean with his rustling paper, and Lady Caroline with her vacant eyes, were at the other end of the room; and Lottie felt isolated, separated, cast upon the tender mercies of the three connoisseurs, a girl with no woman near to stand by her. It seemed to her for the moment as if she must sink into the floor altogether, or else turn and fly.

It was Mr. Ashford again who came to Lottie's aid. "Play something else first," he said softly to the Signor, disregarding the anxious looks of Rollo, who had placed himself on a chair at a little distance, so that he might be able to see the singer and stop any false note that might be coming before it appeared. The others were both kind and clever, kinder than the man whom Lottie thought her lover, and whose anxiety for the moment took all thought from him, and more clever too. The Signor began to play Handel, the serious noble music with which Lottie had grown familiar in the Abbey, and soon Mr. Ashford stepped in and sang in his beautiful melodious voice. Then the strain changed, preluding a song which the most angelic of the choristers had sung that morning. The Minor Canon put the music into Lottie's hands. "Begin here," he whispered. She knew it by ear and by heart, and the paper trembled in her hands; but they made her forget herself, and she began, her voice thrilling and trembling, awe and wonder taking possession of her. She had heard it often, but she had never realised what it was till,

all human, womanish, shivering with excitement and emotion, she began to sing. It did not seem her own doing at all. The dim drawing-room, with the Dean reading the paper, the men in their evening coats, the glimmering reflection of herself which she caught in the long mirror, in her simple decorations, the roses trembling in her hair, all seemed horribly inappropriate, almost profane, to Lottie. And the music shook in her hands, and the notes, instead of remaining steadily before her eyes, where she could read them, took wings to themselves and floated about, now here, now there, sometimes gleaming upon her, sometimes eluding her. Yet she sang, she could not tell how, forgetting everything, though she saw and felt everything, in a passion, in an inspiration, penetrated through and through by the music and the poetry and the sacredness, above her and all of them. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Oh, how did she dare to sing it, how could those commonplace walls enclose it, those men stand and listen as if it was *her* they were listening to? By and by the Dean laid down his paper. Rollo, in the background, gazing on her at first in pale anxiety, then with vexed disapproval (for what did he want with Handel?), came nearer and nearer, his face catching some reflection of hers as she went on. And when Lottie ended, in a rapture she could not explain or understand, they all came pressing round her, dim and blurred figures in her confused eyes. But the girl was too greatly strained to bear their approach or hear what they said. She broke away from them, and rushed, scarcely knowing what she did, to Lady Caroline's side. Lady Caroline herself was roused. She made room for the trembling creature, and Lottie threw herself into the corner of the capacious sofa and covered her face with her hands.

But when she came to herself she would not sing any more. A mixture of guilt and exaltation was in her mind. "I ought not to have sung it. I am not good enough to sing it. I never thought what it meant till now," she said trembling. "Oh, I hope you will forgive me. I never knew what it meant before."

"Forgive you!" said the Dean. "We don't know how to thank you, Miss Despard." He was the person who ought to know what it meant if anybody did. And when he had thus spoken he went back to his paper, a trifle displeased by the fuss she made; as if *she* could have any new revelation of the meaning of a thing which, if not absolutely written for St. Michael's, as good as belonged to the choir, which belonged to the Dean and Chapter! There was a certain presumption involved in Lottie's humility. He went back to his reading-lamp, and finished the article which had been interrupted by her really beautiful rendering of a very fine solo. It was really beautiful; he would not for a moment deny that. But if Miss Despard turned out to be excitable, and gave herself airs, like a real prima donna! Heaven be praised, the little chorister boys never had any nerves, but sang whatever was set before them, without thinking what was meant, the Dean said to himself. And it would be difficult to describe Rollo Ridsdale's disappointment.

He sat down in a low chair by the side of the sofa, and talked to her in a whisper. "I understand you," he said; "it is like coming down from the heaven of heavens, where you have carried us. But the other spheres are celestial too. Miss Despard, I shall drop down into sheer earth to-morrow. I am going away. I shall lose the happiness of hearing you altogether. Will you not have pity upon me, and lead me a little way into the earthly paradise?" But even these prayers did not move Lottie. She was too much shaken and disturbed out of the unconscious calm of her being for anything more.

CHAPTER XII.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

LOTTIE ran out while Rollo Ridsdale was getting his hat to accompany her home. She caught up her shawl over her arm without pausing to put it on, and ran through the dark Cloister and across the Dean's Walk to her own door, before he knew she was ready. "The young-lady is gone, sir," Mr. Jeremie said, who was rather indignant at having to open the door to such sort of people. He would have said young woman had he dared. Rollo, much piqued already in that she had refused to sing for him further, and half irritated, half attracted by this escapade now, hurried after her; but when he emerged from the gloom of the Cloister to the fresh dewy air of the night, and the breadth of the Dean's Walk, lying half visible in summer darkness in the soft indistinct radiance of the stars, there was no one visible, far or near. She had already gone in before he came in sight of the door. He looked up and down the silent way, on which not a creature was visible, and listened to the sound of the door closing behind her. The sight and the sound awoke a new sentiment in his mind. Ladies were not apt to avoid Rollo.

Not his the form nor his the eye
That youthful maidens wont to fly.

He was piqued and he was roused. Heretofore, honestly, there had been little but music in his thoughts. The girl was very handsome, which was so much the better—very much the better, for his purpose; but this sparkle of resistance in her roused something else in his mind. Lottie had been like an inspired creature as she sang, this evening. He had never seen on the stage or elsewhere so wonderful an exhibition of absorbed impassioned feeling. If he could secure her for his *prima donna*, nowhere would such a *prima donna* be seen. It was not that she had thrown herself into the music, but that the music had possessed her, and transported her out of herself. This was not a common human creature. She was no longer merely handsome, but beautiful in the fervour of her feeling. And for the first time Lottie as Lottie, not merely as a singer, touched a well-worn but still sensitive chord in his breast. He stood

looking at the door which still seemed to echo in the stillness with the jar of closing. What did her flight mean? He was provoked, tantalised, stimulated. Whatever happened, he must see more of this girl. Why should she fly from him? He did not choose to return and tell the story of her flight, which was such an incident as always makes the man who is baulked present a more or less ridiculous aspect to the spectators; but he stood outside and waited till the steps of the Minor Canon and the Signor had become audible turning each towards their habitation, and even the turning of Mr. Ashford's latch-key in his door. Everything was very still in the evening at St. Michael's. The respectable and solemn Canons in their great houses, and the old Chevaliers in their little lodges, went early to bed. Rollo saw no light anywhere except a dim glow in the window of the little drawing-room where he had spent the morning, and where no doubt the fugitive was seated breathless. His curiosity was raised, and his interest, supplanting that professional eagerness about her voice which he had expressed so largely. Why did she run away from him? Why did she refuse to sing for him? These questions suddenly sprang into his mind, and demanded, if not reply, yet a great deal of consideration. He could not make up his mind what the cause could be.

As for Lottie, she could not have given any reasonable answer to these questions, though she was the only living creature who could know why she ran away. As a matter of fact, she did not know. The music had been more than she could bear in the state of excitement in which she was. Excited about things she would have been ashamed to confess any special interest in—about her relations with the Deanery, about Lady Caroline, and, above all, about Rollo—the wonderful strain to which she had all unconsciously and unthinkingly, at first, given utterance, had caught at Lottie like a hand from heaven. She had been drawn upward into the fervour of religious ecstasy, she who was so ignorant; and when she dropped again to earth and was conscious once more of Rollo and of Lady Caroline, there had come upon her a sudden sense of shame and of her own pettiness and inability to disentangle herself from the links that drew her to earth which was as passionate as the sudden fervour. How dare she sing *that* one moment, and the next be caught down to vulgar life, to Lady Caroline and Rollo Ridsdale? Lottie would sing no more, and could not speak, so strong was the conflict within her. She could not even encounter the momentary *tête-à-tête* which before she had almost wished for. She was roused and stirred in all her being as she had never been before, able to encounter death or grief, she thought vaguely, or anything that was solemn and grand, but not ordinary talk, not compliments, not the little tender devices of courtship. She flew from the possible touch of sentiment, the half-mock, half-real flatteries that he would be ready to say to her. Love real, and great, and solemn, the Love of which the Italian poet speaks as twin sister of Death, was what Lottie's mind was prepared for; but from anything lower she fled, with

the instinct of a nature highly strained and unaccustomed to, though capable of, passion. Everything was seething in her mind, her heart beating, the blood coursing through her veins. She felt that she could not bear the inevitable downfall of ordinary talk. She ran out into the soft coolness of the night, the great quiet and calm of the sleeping place, a fugitive driven by this new wind of strange emotion. The shadow of the Abbey was grateful to her, lying dimly half way across the broad silent road—and the dim lamp in her own window seemed to point out a refuge from her thoughts. She rushed across the empty road, like a ghost flitting, white and noiseless, and swift as an arrow, from the gate of the Cloister, wondering whether the maid would hear her knock at once, or if she would have to wait there at the door till Mr. Ridsdale appeared. But the door was opened at her first touch, to Lottie's great surprise, by Law, who seemed to have been watching for her arrival. He wore a very discontented aspect, but this Lottie did not at first see, in her grateful sense of safety.

"How early you are!" he said. "I did not expect you for an hour yet. It was scarcely worth while going out at all, if you were to come back so soon."

Lottie made no reply. She went upstairs to the little drawing-room where the lamp had been screwed as low as possible to keep alight for her when she should return. The room was still more dim than Lady Caroline's, and looked so small and insignificant in comparison. On the table was a tray with some bread and butter and a cup of milk, which was Lottie's simple supper after her dissipation; for Lady Caroline's cup of tea was scarcely enough for a girl who had eaten a not too luxurious dinner at two o'clock. She had no mind, however, for her supper now; but sat down on the little sofa and covered her eyes with her hand, and went back into her thoughts, half to prolong the excitement into which she had plunged, half to still herself and get rid of this sudden transport. It would be difficult to say which she wished most; to calm herself down or to continue that state of exaltation which proved to her new capabilities in her own being. She thought it was the former desire that moved her, and that to be quiet was all she wanted; but yet that strong tide running in her veins, that hot beating of her heart, that expansion and elevation of everything in her, was full of an incomprehensible agony of sweetness and exquisite sensation. She did not know what it was. She covered her eyes to shut out the immediate scene around her. The little shabby room, the bread and butter, and Law's slouching figure manipulating the lamp—these, at least, were accessories which she had no desire to see.

"Bother the thing!" said Law, "I can't get it to burn. Here, Lottie! you can manage them. Oh! if you like to sit in the dark, I don't mind. Were your fine people disagreeable? I always told you they wanted nothing but that you should sing for them and amuse them. They don't care a rap for you!"

Lottie took no notice of this speech. She withdrew her hand from her face, but still kept her eyes half-closed, unwilling to be roused out of her dream.

"They're all as selfish as old bears!" said Law; "most people are, for that matter. They never think of you; you've got to look after yourself; it's their own pleasure they're thinking of. What can you expect from strangers when a man that pretends to be one's own father——?"

"What are you talking about?" said Lottie, slowly waking, with a feeling of disgust and impatience, out of her finer fancies. She could not keep some shade of scorn and annoyance from her face.

"You needn't put on those supercilious looks; you'll suffer as much from it as I shall, or perhaps more, for a man can always do for himself," said Law; "but you—you'll find the difference. Lottie," he continued, forgetting resentment in this common evil, and sinking his voice, "he's down there at the old place again."

"What old place?"

As soon as his complaining voice became familiar, Lottie closed her eyes again, longing to resume her own thoughts.

"Oh! the old place. Why, down there; you know—the place where—I say!" cried Law, suddenly growing red, and perceiving the betrayal of himself as well as his father which was imminent, "never mind where it is; it's where that sharp one, Polly Featherstone, works."

Lottie was completely awakened now; she looked up, half-bewildered, from the dispersing mists. "Of whom are you talking?" she cried. "Law, what people have you got among—who are they? You frighten me! Who is it you are talking of?"

"There's no harm in them," cried Law, colouring more and more. "What do you mean? Do you think they're—I don't know what you mean; they're as good as we are," he added sullenly, walking away with his hands in his pockets out of the revelations of the lamp. Dim and low as it was, it disclosed, he was aware, an uncomfortable glow of colour on his face.

"I don't know who *they* may be," said Lottie, severe, yet blushing too; "I don't want to know! But, oh! Law; you that are so young, my only brother, why should you know people I couldn't know? Why should you be ashamed of anyone you go to see?"

"I was not talking of people *I* go to see; I wish you wouldn't be so absurd; I'm talking of the governor," said Law, speaking very fast; "he is there, I tell you, a man of his time of life, sitting among a lot of girls, talking away fifteen to the dozen. He might find some other way of meeting her if he must meet her!" cried Law, his own grievance breaking out in spite of him. "What has he got to do there among a pack of girls? it's disgraceful at his age!"

Law was very sore, angry, and disappointed. He had gone to his usual resort in the evening, and had seen his father there before him, and

had been obliged to retire discomfited, with a jibe from Emma to intensify his trouble. "The Captain's twice the man you are!" the little dressmaker had said; "he ain't afraid of nobody." Poor Law had gone away after this, and strolled despondently along the river-side. He did not know what to do with himself. Lottie was at the Deanery, he was shut out of his usual refuge, and he had nowhere to go. Though he had no money, he jumped into a boat and rowed himself dismally about the river, dropping down below the bridge to where he could see the lighted windows of the workroom. There he lingered about, nobody seeing or taking any notice of him. When he approached the bank, he could even hear the sound of their voices, the laughter with which they received the Captain's witticisms. A little wit went a long way in that com- plaisant circle. He could make out Captain Despard's shadow against the window, never still for a moment, moving up and down, amusing the girls with songs, jokes, pieces of buffoonery. Law despised these devices; but, oh! how he envied the skill of the actor. He hung about the river in his boat till it got quite dark, almost run into sometimes by other boats, indifferent to everything but this lighted interior which he could see, though nobody in it could see him. And when he was tired of this forlorn amusement he came home, finding the house very empty and desolate. He tried to work, but how was it possible to work under the sting of such a recollection? The only thing he could do was to wait for Lottie, to pour forth his complaint to her, to hope that she might perhaps find some remedy for this intolerable wrong. It did not occur to him that to betray his father was also to betray himself, and that Lottie might feel as little sympathy for him as he did for Captain Despard. This fact flashed upon him now when it was too late.

Lottie had not risen from her seat, but as she sat there, everything round seemed to waver about her, then settle down again in a sudden revelation of mean, and small, and paltry life, such as she had scarcely ever realised before. Not only the lofty heaven into which the music had carried her rolled away like a scroll, but the other world, which was beautiful also of its kind, from which she had fled, which had seemed too poor to remain in, after the preceding ecstasy, departed as with a glimmer of wings; and she found herself awaking in a life where everything was squalid and poor, where she alone, with despairing efforts, tried to prop up the house that it might not fall into dishonoured dust. She had borne with a kind of contemptuous equanimity Law's first story about her father. Let him marry again! she had said; if he could secure the thing he called his happiness in such a way, let him do it! The idea had filled her with a high scorn. She had not thought of herself nor of the effect it might have upon her, but had risen superior to it with lofty contempt, and put it from her mind. But this was different. With all her high notions of gentility, and all her longings after a more splendid sphere, this sudden revelation of a sphere meaner, lower still, struck

Lottie with a sudden pang. A pack of girls! what kind of girls could those be of whom Law spoke? Her blood rushed to her face scorching her with shame. She who scorned the Chevaliers and their belongings! She who had "kept her distance" from her own class, was it possible that she was to be dragged down lower, lower, to shame itself? Her voice was choked in her throat. She did not feel able to speak. She could only cry out to him, clasping her hands, "Don't tell me any more—oh, don't tell me any more——"

"Hillo!" said the lad, "what is the matter with you? Don't tell you any more? You will soon know a great deal more if you don't do something to put a stop to it. There ought to be a law against it. A man's children ought to be able to put a stop to it. I told you before, Lottie, if you don't exert yourself and do something——"

"Oh," she said, rising to her feet, "what can I do? Can I put honour into you, and goodness, and make you what I want you to be? Oh, if I could, Law! I would give you my blood out of my veins if I could. But I can't put me into you," she said, wringing her hands—"and you expect me to listen to stories—about people I ought not to hear of—about women—O Law, Law, how dare you speak so to me?"

"Hold hard!" said Law, "you don't know what you are speaking of. The girls are as good girls as you are—" his own cheeks flushed with indignant shame as he spoke. "You are just like what they say of women. You are always thinking of something bad. What are you after all, Lottie Despard? A poor shabby Captain's daughter! You make your own gowns and they make other people's. I don't see such a dreadful difference in that."

Lottie was overpowered by all the different sensations that succeeded each other in her. She felt herself swept by what felt like repeated waves of trouble—shame to hear of these people among whom both her father and brother found their pleasure, shame to have thought more badly of them than they deserved, shame to have betrayed to Law her knowledge that there were women existing of whom to speak was a shame. She sank down upon the sofa again trembling and agitated, relieved yet not relieved. "Law," she said faintly, "we are poor enough ourselves, I know. But even if we don't do much credit to our birth, is it not dreadful to be content with that, to go down lower, to make ourselves nothing at all?"

"It is not my fault," said Law, a little moved, "nor yours neither. I am very sorry for you, Lottie; for you've got such a high mind—it will go hardest with you. As for me, I've got no dignity to stand on, and if he drives me to it, I shall simply 'list—that's what I shall do."

"'List!" Lottie gazed at him pathetically. She was no longer angry, as she had been when he spoke of this before. "You are out of your senses, Law! You, a gentleman!"

"A gentleman!" he said bitterly, "much good it does me. It might,

perhaps, be of some use if we were rich, if we belonged to some great family which nobody could mistake; but the kind of gentlefolks we are!—nobody knowing anything about us, except through what *he* pleases to do and say. I tell you, if the worst comes to the worst, I will go straight off to the first sergeant I see, and take the shilling. In the Guards there's many a better gentleman than I am, and I'm tall enough for the Guards," he said, looking down with a little complacency on his own long limbs. The look struck Lottie with a thrill of terror and pain. There were soldiers enough about St. Michael's to make her keenly and instantly aware how perfectly their life, as it appeared to her, would chime in with Law's habits. They seemed to Lottie to be always lounging about the streets stretching their long limbs, expanding their broad chests in the sight of all the serving maidens, visible in their red coats wherever the idle congregated, wherever there was any commotion going on. She perceived in a moment, as by a flash of lightning, that nothing could be more congenial to Law. What work might lie behind, what difficulties of subordination, tyrannies of hours and places, distasteful occupations—Lottie knew nothing about. She saw in her brother's complacent glance, a something of kin to the swagger of the tall fellows in their red jackets, spreading themselves out before admiring nurse-maids. Law would do that too. She could not persuade herself that there was anything in him above the swagger, superior to the admiration of the maids. A keen sense of humiliation, and the sharp impatience of a proud spirit, unable to inspire those most near to it with anything of its own pride and energy, came into her mind. "You do not mind being a gentleman—you do not care," she cried. "Oh, I know you are not like me! But how will you like being under orders, Law, never having your freedom, never able to do what you please, or to go anywhere without leave? That is how soldiers live. They are slaves; they have to obey, always to obey. You could not do anything because you wanted to do it—you could not spend an evening at home—Oh," she cried with a sudden stamp of her foot in impatience with herself, "that is not what I mean to say; for what would you care for coming home? But you could not go to that place—that delightful place—that you and papa prefer to home. I know you don't care for home," said Lottie. "Oh, it is a compliment, a great compliment to me!"

And, being overwrought and worn out with agitation, she suddenly broke down and fell a crying, not so much that she felt the slight and the pang of being neglected, but because all these agitations had been too much for her, and she felt for the moment that she could bear no more.

At the sight of her tears sudden remorse came over Law. He went to her side and stood over her, touching her shoulder with his hand. "Don't cry, Lottie," he said, with compunction. And then, after a moment, "It isn't for you; you're always jolly and kind. I don't mind what I say to you; you might know everything I do if you liked. But

home, you know, home's not what a fellow cares for. Oli, yes! I care for it in a way—I care for you; but except you, what is there, Lottie? And I can't always be talking to you, can I? A fellow wants a little more than that. So do you; you want more than me. If I had come into the drawing-room this morning and strummed on the piano, what would you have done? Sent me off or boxed my ears if I'd have let you. But that fellow Ridsdale comes and you like it. You needn't say no; I am certain you liked it. But brother and sister, you know that's not so amusing! "Come, Lottie, you know that as well as I."

"I don't know it, it is not true!" Lottie cried, with a haste and emphasis which she herself felt to be unnecessary. "But what has that to do with the matter? Allow that you do not care for your home, Law; but is it necessary to go off and separate yourself from your family, to give up your position, everything? I will tell you what we will do. We will go to Mr. Ashford, and he will let us know honestly what he thinks—what you are fit for. All examinations are not so hard; there must be something that you could do."

Law made a wry face, but he did not contradict his sister. "I wish he would cut me out with a pair of scissors and make me fit somewhere," he said, with a shrug of his shoulders. Then he added, almost caressingly, "Take your supper, Lottie; you're tired, and you want something; I have had mine. And you have not told me a word about to-night. Why did you come in so early? How are you and Ridsdale getting on? Oh! what's the good of making a fuss about it? Do you think I can't see as plain as porridge what *that* means?"

"What what means?" cried Lottie, springing from her seat with such passionate energy as half frightened the lad. "How dare you, Law? Do you think I am one of the girls you are used to? How dare you speak to me so?"

"Why should you make such a fuss about it?" cried Law, laughing, yet retreating. "If there is nothing between you and Ridsdale, what does the fellow want loafing about here? Lottie! I say, mind what you're doing. I don't mind taking your advice sometimes, but I won't be bullied by you."

"You had better go to bed, Law!" said Lottie, with dignified contempt. After all the agitations of the evening it was hard to be brought down again to the merest vulgarities of gossip like this. She paid no more attention to her brother, but gathered together her shawl, her gloves, the shabby little fan which had been her mother's, and put out the lamp, leaving him to find his way to his room as he could. She was too indignant for words. He thought her no better than the dress-maker-girls he had spoken of, to be addressed with vulgar stupid rillery such as no doubt they liked. This was the best Lottie had to look for in her own home. She swept out, throwing the train of her long white skirt from her hand with a movement which would have delighted Rollo, and went away to the darkness and stillness of her own little

chamber, with scarcely an answer to the "Good-night" which Law flung at her as he shuffled away. She sat down on her little bed in the dark without lighting her candle; it was her self-imposed duty to watch there till she heard her father's entrance. And there, notwithstanding her stately withdrawal, poor Lottie, overcome, sobbed and cried. She had nobody to turn to, nor anything to console her, except the silence and pitying darkness which hid her girlish weakness even from herself.

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